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**GROWTH OF NATIONALISM  
IN  
INDIA  
( 1919-1929 )**

**Vol. II**

**Dr. Sukhbir Choudhary**



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# **GROWTH OF NATIONALISM IN INDIA**

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## Author's Note

The material incorporated in this volume is a continuation of the study of the subject covered by the first volume. This volume is a revised version of the thesis submitted by me for Ph. D. Degree as a research student of Indian School of International Studies, at present a unit of Jawahar Lal Nehru University. On my part I have attempted to interpret in an unprejudiced manner the various facets subscribing to the phenomenon of National Awareness. This Nationalist View played a historical role in finally overthrowing British Imperialism from the soil of India as well as in awakening a sense of pride and self-confidence in our people. I have also tried to cover briefly the emanation of Socialism which was simultaneously simmering as a corollary of nationalism in the period under study.

SUKHBIR CHOUDHARY



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## CHAPTER I

# POLITICS OF CONFLICT

### A—Political and Administrative Measures of Imperialist Rule

*I do not care what form of Government you have, you must always have something corresponding to the Civil Service; you may change the form of Government, but you cannot change the nature of the people of India, who like a personal rule. Indian politicians are interested only in the form of Government but there are 240 millions of people in British India who do not care two straws what is the form of Government provided it is a stable one. It cannot be stable without a strong Indian Civil Service and Police.*

*[Speech by Sir Charles Innes, a Member of the Government of India, in the Legislative Assembly on 10 September 1924, Legislative Assembly Debates (1924) Vol. IV, P. 3167.]*

### General Conditions

The commercial classes in India had made substantial profits during the First World War and had succeeded in establishing their industry on a relatively firm basis. But after the War was over the alien regime appeared to take back what it had been forced to cede during the emergency. Denied the political and economic privileges essential to safeguard their industry the commercial classes became dissatisfied with the alien rule. On the other hand, the suffering of the masses had increased due to the rise in the prices of necessary commodities during the War and the

slump in agricultural prices after the War. Revenues to be paid to the Zamindars by the tenants also increased. In the villages of northern India the forcible methods of recruitment for War were still fresh in the minds of people. The severe suppression of the "Komagata Maru" people returning from Canada by conspiracy trials struck horror. Returned soldiers from the Army after the War was over were also dissatisfied. There was much unemployment among the educated lower middle classes. In these circumstances people desired reforms in the regime for improving their lot. The Montagu-Chelmsford Reforms which were offered might have satisfied Indians a decade earlier but appeared to be inadequate in the conditions of post-war days. Nationalist India was then burning with fury because the British Imperialists who had made lavish promises of self-government, produced the proverbial mouse in the end. There was a section of the people led by the Moderates like S.N. Banerjea and Srinivas Sastry, which was eager to implement the Reforms for what they were worth. But before they could be implemented there appeared the Rowlatt Report. And whatever illusions were left about British good faith was soon torn to shreds by the introduction of the Rowlatt Report.

### **Protest Against Rowlatt Report**

Whatever might have been the motives of the Government in publishing the Rowlatt Report, it met the general disapproval of the Indian public opinion including both the Moderates and the Tilakites. The critics believed that the enactment of the Report into special laws would mean the curtailment of freedom of even those who were in no way associated with the Terrorist Movement. Moreover, the special laws, they held, bestowed enormous power upon the Government to arrest and keep suspected persons imprisoned without trial. At the 1918 Session of the Congress at Delhi "strong protests were made against the Rowlatt Report.... The whole meeting (session) was a triumph for the ultra-Left-wing...."<sup>1</sup> (Here the word "ultra-Left-wing" is obviously

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1. *India in the years 1917 and 1918* (Calcutta, Government of India, 1919), p. 66.

used for the Tilakites.) Opposing the Rowlatt Bill in the Imperial Legislative Council Vithalbhai Patel, a follower of Tilak, said :

What I am, however, surprised at really is that a Bill of this kind should have been brought forward at a time when people really expected the introduction and discussion in this Council of measures which would bring them more liberty, more contentment.... I say, to say the least of these measures, they are 'inopportune' and they should not have been brought forward at this juncture. There is almost a quietus in the country, and a tremendous agitation such as I fear to contemplate, is looming.<sup>2</sup>

At the time of the discussion on the Bills in the Assembly Tilak was in England. He held a meeting in London to protest against the Rowlatt Act.<sup>3</sup> A few days later he said in reply to a letter from Dr. D.D. Sathy, a leader in Bombay, that he himself had already written that "we should fully support Mr. Gandhi in his satyagraha against the Rowlatt Act."<sup>4</sup> On his arrival at Bombay he said at a public reception organized in his honour on 27 November 1919 :

I wish I had been here when Gandhi began satyagraha. I would have borne difficulties with him and undergone hardship. I am angry with Gandhi for that.<sup>5</sup>

While on his way to the Amritsar Congress in December, 1919 Tilak dispatched telegrams to Lord Chelmsford and Montagu offering his responsive co-operation. This, however had nothing to do with the agitation on the Rowlatt Act. His responsiveness was directed towards the amended form of the Montford Reforms and the liberal attitude of the British Government in releasing the political prisoners.<sup>6</sup>

2. *India in 1919* (Calcutta, Government of India, 1920), p. 28.

3. Dhananjay Keer, *Lokmanya Tilak* (Bombay, 1959), p. 405.

4. Letter quoted by Dhananjay Keer, *Ibid.*

5. *The Hindu* (Madras), 28 November 1919, p. 1; Also see Ram Gopal, *Lokmanya Tilak* (Asia Publishing House, 1956), p. 439.

6. For detailed study see S.L. Karandikar, *Tilak* (Bombay, 1957), pp. 597-619.

Although the Moderates like Srinivas Sastry, while opposing the motion of William Vincent ( Home Member ) in the Imperial Legislative Council, made quite impressive speeches<sup>7</sup> and drew applause even from the European Members and Bureaucrats, yet they, as the accredited representatives of the Moderate wing, were the first to hasten and try to dissuade Gandhiji from launching the *satyagraha* against the Rowlatt Acts.

In the state of disturbed public opinion the Rowlatt Bills were enacted into Rowlatt Laws. Gandhiji and his followers denounced them as unjust and subservise of all the principles of liberty and justice and destructive of the elementary rights of the individual. They ignored the advice of leaders like Srinivas Sastry and others and launched the *satyagraha* movement for the purpose of disobeying the Rowlatt Acts<sup>8</sup>. While this moment was spreading, there occurred the Amritsar tragedy when hundreds of people were killed.

It may be recalled here that during the course of his speech delivered at Calcutta in 1905 Lord Curzon had warned the members of the Indian Administrative Service that they would never rule the East except through the "heart" and the moment imagination had disappeared from their Asian policy their Empire would "dwindle and decay"<sup>9</sup> It appears that when General Dyer ordered the indiscriminate shooting at Jallianwallah Bagh in 1919 the bureaucracy in India had lost the required imagination. Since then the decay of the British Empire set in. Condemning the atrocities *Kisan Samachar*, an organ of the Bihar Provincial Congress Committee

7. In his speech Sastry warned the Government: "If our appeals fell flat, if the [Rowlatt] bill goes through, I do not believe there is anyone here who would be doing his duty if he did not join the agitation." [*Speeches and writings of Sastry* (Madras, Natesan & Co., 1st ed.) P. 169.
8. For further study see *Young India* (1919-22), a collection of writings by Gandhiji [Madras, 1922], pp. 63-88.
9. G. S. Raghunath Rao, ed., *Notable Speeches of Lord Curzon* (Madras, 1905), P. 345.

forecast that the prestige of Britain would be shortly "washed away in the strong current of the blood of the oppressed."<sup>10</sup> The Amritsar incident was an indirect gain to the tremendous growth of national consciousness in India. In the words of a prominent Muslim nationalist from Assam, "on the ashes of the Bagh martyrs Phoenix-like rose a new India."<sup>11</sup> Never before had such strong anti-British feelings been roused as on this occasion. Never before had the long pent up discontent of the intelligentsia begun to express itself in the organization of anti-alien demonstrations as now.<sup>12</sup> Dyer's deed hardened their determination. They felt that the British people had come to consider Indians as a foreign people with whom they were at war. They had forgotten the war days when Indians turned their own people into mercenaries for maintaining the aggrandisement of a race "wallowing in the mire of imperialism."<sup>13</sup> Indians also reacted sharply to the British attempt to justify that Dyer's ruthlessness had succeeded in putting a stop to what might have turned into a revolution.<sup>14</sup> They were determined to undo—as shown and proved by the later political developmens—the British impression that the "blood of the

10. *History of the Freedom Movement in Bihar* (Government of Bihar, 1957), Part I, Appendix XVI, pp. 573-74.

11. M. Tayyebulla, *Between the Symbol and the Ideal at last* (New Delhi, 1965), p.4

12. Surendra Nath Banerjea, in his own expressive and touching style, has depicted the nation's indignation and uproar:

The educated community in India were convulsed by one of those agitations that follow in the track of misgovernment. It was the fruit of the disastrous policy pursued by Sir Michael O' Dwyer in the Punjab. The deportation of Dr Kitchlew and Satyapal, the popular upheaval at Amritsar...Kindled a conflagration throughout India which it will take many years to allay. It penetrated north, south, east, west, and for a time stirred the hearts of all, and invested the Reforms with a sinister hue.

[S.N. Banerjea, *A Nation in Making* (London, 1925), p. 328.]

13. Rabindranath Tagore, "Ccnstructive work," *Modern Review* (Colcutta, 1921), Vol. XXIX, p. 356.

14. See Government of India's letter to Montagu, 3 May 1920, *Disorders Inquiry Committee Report* (Delhi, Govt. of India), p. XXII.

martyrs is by no means invariably the seed of the church.”<sup>15</sup> Further insult to injury was added when General Dyer delivered his statement before the Inquiry commission. His assertion that by ordering shooting he wanted not only to disperse a belligerent crowd but to produce a sufficient moral impact from a military point of view was taken by Indians as a manifestation of the cruel doctrine which the British themselves had denounced as “Prussianism”. It was alleged to have created a situation “blackier than the ‘black hole’ of Calcutta.”<sup>16</sup> The perpetrators of the tragedy were publicly alleged to be the victim of ‘spirit of Mutiny’. But before Indians could recover from the surprise and shock of the Jallianwalla Bagh massacres they had another shock when they learnt, that 129 British Peers including most of the landlords supported the hero of the massacre whom they regarded as the “saviour of India” and the *Morning Post* mailed £ 26,317 by public subscription for him as a “full token of debt the empire owes to you.”

This sort of Imperialist behaviour aroused Indians to think more seriously about the future of their country. In his letter written from Paris on 7 September, 1920 Tagore called upon his countrymen that the mission of their life was to “revive the dead with the fire of soul.”<sup>17</sup> Somewhat similar views were expressed by the other politically conscious forces at home as well. “Arise, O Indian heroes! March Onward and shake off your slumber and proclaim to the world that you are not dead and that you have got the spark of life in you. With your combined strength shatter the fetters of

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15. British impression quoted by the renowned psychologist Aldous Huxley, *Jesting Pilate* (London, 1927), p. 54.

16. *Modern Review* (Calcutta, 1927), Vol. XXVIII, p. 361.

In protest against humiliation and persecution of the people of the Punjab Tagore renounced the knighthood conferred upon him by the King Emperor. The poet's heart was lacerated by this outrage against Indians. The language of the letter he then wrote to the Viceroy was unique. The international sensation created by Tagore's action caused the British considerable embarrassment.

17. Rabindra Nath Tagore, “Letters from Abroad” *Modern Review* (Calcutta, 1921), vol. XXX, p. 553.

slavery and thus put an end to your miseries. Will you meekly hear the cries of Punjab? Will you forget atrocities of Dyer? Have you no regard for the respect of your mothers and sisters? Today foreigners are sucking our blood and becoming fat while we are, unfortunate that we are, having only our bones and skins left. Arise and with a bold attitude tell those wicked people that you are men and that you will regain freedom," thus the *Kisan Samachar* exhorted.<sup>18</sup>

Despite unending protests against its policies, the Civil Service appeared to have failed to appreciate what the national movement had accomplished during this short duration. For the growth of political consciousness in the masses under the leadership of the intelligentsia had brought into existence a new Indian nation which was seeking to find self-expression. It could not be forced back into an out-moded existence. "My blood is boiling....We must not allow the grass grow under our feet....We must hold a special Congress now and raise a veritable hell for the rascals", wrote Pandit Motilal Nehru to his son in a most bitter mood on<sup>19</sup> May 1920. "We are determined to battle with all our might," wrote Gandhiji to the Duke of Connaught in February 1921, "against that un-English nature which has made Dyerism possible."<sup>20</sup>

Failure to deal adequately with such a national upsurge, even in the debates conducted in British Parliament appeared to the Indian people as the neglect of their legitimate right to exist as a nation. The higher their character, the stronger their indignation. Civil service lost the confidence of the Indians who began to believe that no one surrendered power unless he was forced to. In fact, the events of 1919 were the brand of subjection "burnt into the living."<sup>21</sup> In his letter

18. *History of the Freedom Movement in Bihar*, n.10,p.563.

19. Jawaharlal Nehru, *A Bunch of Old Letters* (New Delhi, 1958), pp. 15-16.

20. Miss Blanche Watson, ed., *Gandhi and Non-Violent Resistance*; a collection by and on Gandhiji (Madras, 1923), p.445.

21. *The Round Table* (1919), Vol. VII, p. 618.



from London on 22 July, 1920 Tagore characterized it a "fatal dose of power" which could only be available in a dependency where the manhood of the entire population had been crushed into helplessness.<sup>22</sup>

### 1919 Reforms Opposed

Though quite a large number of Indians disapproved of the promulgation of the 1919 Reforms, even then whatever little good they contained for India they were also opposed by the members of the bureaucracy in principle. Some of them thought in terms of Aristotle's philosophy and believed that the Indian was doomed by his nature always to be a "bondman".<sup>23</sup> They believed that Englishmen were in India by their own moral superiority and by the will of providence. In fact, the bureaucracy was inclined to look upon every measure towards self-rule as an insult to itself. Their obstruction was based on the consideration that if Indians came into power under the new scheme of reforms, the existence of the bureaucratic agency would become obviously preposterous. If Indians were capable of controlling the directorate, they must surely be in a position to provide civil servants. These feelings of the bureaucracy were reflected in two books, *The Lost Dominion* (1924) by A. L. Carthil, an anonymous author, most probably belonging to the I. C. S. cadre and *India as I knew It* by Michael O'Dwyer, the Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab in those days.

The authors of these books believed that it was wrong to think that the Indian people had acquired the desire and capability for representative institutions which the British people had. On the other hand, One Man Rule was common throughout the orient. The so-called democratic constitution imparted by the 1917 Declaration could never be understood

22. Rabindra Nath Tagore, "Letters from Abroad", *Modern Review* (Calcutta, 1921), Vol XXX, p. 421.

23. Philip Woodruff, *The Men Who Ruled India : The Guardians* (London, 3rd edition, 1955), p. 235,

by the men in the street or in the rural areas. It was not possible for the Eastern mind to introduce the Western methods of administration in India. The consequences of "pouring the new heady wine of the West into the ancient wine-skins of the East" were believed to have been so far a great calamity. In these circumstances the democratic institutions were as much out of place there as a "furcoat in the tropics."<sup>24</sup> If, therefore, the transfer of power was made, it would be a rash decision. It would culminate in a general upsurge which might bring to an end not only an impracticable constitutional experiment but topple down all the structure of security and civilization built by the hard labour of more than a century. And India would soon be a 'Lost Dominion' for the British. The burden of criticism fell particularly on the authors of 1917 Reforms Scheme. In support of the argument, Michael O'Dwyer quoted what Demosthenes had once said to the Athenians, "The Gods alone preserve our Empire, for we on our part are doing all we can to destroy it."<sup>25</sup> This sort of hostile attitude became the target of attack even by non-official Europeans. One of them commented when the Montford Reforms were under discussion, "The Civil Service, as it exists at present in India, is an anachronism." Another said, "The difficulty that lies before you in advancing 'dyarchy' is that, no matter how you may gild the pill, if your scheme is to work, the Indian Civil Service, as at present constituted, must eventually go. Dyarchy and an autocratic bureaucracy cannot exist together."<sup>26</sup>

### Criticism of Intelligentsia

To government officials the intelligentsia appeared to be "hypnotized" by the catchword of democracy which they neither understood nor desired.<sup>27</sup> In their view, to silence the clamour of the Indian politicians the interests of all other

24 Michael O'Dwyer, *India As I Knew It* (London, 1925), p.407.

25 *Ibid.*

26 L. C. Curtis, *Papers Relating to the Application of the Principle of Dyarchy to the Government of India* (Oxford, 1920), pp. 142-44.

27 Michael O'Dwyer, n. 24, p. 408.

classes were sacrificed to a "rash and crude"<sup>28</sup> political experiment. Warning the British Government "against the pursuance of this policy Michael O'Dwyer had quoted Burke's well-known statement :

Because half a dozen grasshoppers under a fern make the field ring with their importunate cries, while thousands of great cattle, reposed beneath the shadow of the British oak, chew their cud and are silent, pray do not imagine that those who make the noise are the only inhabitants of the field.<sup>29</sup>

Thus the Indian leaders were compared to 'grasshoppers' and the rest of the Indian people to 'cattle'. The officials also alleged that the intelligentsia could never courageously work during the violent communal disturbances in India. They evaded all responsibilities. Whatever little political power was transferred to Indian intellectuals, even there they had displayed the absence of clear vision and consistent approach. They were alleged to have refused to face the realities. "They are the slaves", wrote Michael O'Dwyer, "of empty but high-sounding formulae, and are governed by impulse and passing emotions rather than by the cold light of reason and experience. They do not know what they want and they won't be happy till they get it."<sup>30</sup> Moreover, most of the intellectuals among Hindus and Muslims were a strange congregation of distinct races and communities in unequal phases of political development. Criticising persons who saw Montague to impress upon him the necessity of political change, Michael O'Dwyer expressed the view that those who had failed badly to manage a school, a newspaper, or a petty municipality were ready with plans to "run an Empire."<sup>31</sup> Any transfer of political power, in these circumstances, would culminate in the accession to authority of one particular group ruling over all other less advanced

28. *Ibid.*

*Ibid*, p. 410.

30. *Ibid*, p.445.

31. *Ibid*, pp. 376-77.

ones.<sup>32</sup> This is what had happened by the promulgation of 1919 Reforms. They gave control of administration to narrow, inexperienced, unrepresentative, clamorous and noisy oligarchy of intellectuals. This experiment was the product of theories, which had never been tried in any other country and India should be the last place for such a fantastic innovation. In fact, the Civil Servant was too arrogant to concede that educated Indians would ever become rulers in their country.

The inference should not, however, be drawn that persons like Michael O' Dwyer were the sole representatives of the British point of view. Persons like Montagu were greater authorities in expounding British policy. But the number of such gentlemen was surely very limited. Most of the bureaucrats sent to India felt pride in acting as Empire-builders.

#### Suppression of the Masses

The same bureaucracy which claimed to be so much the well-wisher of the masses became an instrument for oppressing

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32 On the other hand the members of the Civil Service claimed to have done more philanthropic and welfare work than that done by Indian intelligentsia, for the masses. For instance, the encouragement to the movement of co-operative societies for masses. An official annual publication acclaimed large measure of success which had attended the movement in Bihar and Orissa in its primary object of removing indebtedness. According to this report, during the 3½ years immediately preceding January 1925 the amount of interest saved for the members on an average calculation was estimated at about Rs. 35 lakhs, the amount of land redeemed by members at 15 thousand acres, and the land newly purchased at 10 thousand acres, while the number of their cattle had increased by over a lakh. According to the same source, the total indebtedness of members since they joined the movement had been reduced at the beginning of the year from Rs. 58 lakhs to Rs 52 lakhs, and the bulk of their debts to money-lenders had been transferred to societies. [*India in 1925-26*, p.161.] The British civil servants also claimed that they discouraged the masses to incur extravagant expenditure on ceremonies and also gave lessons to them to inculcate the habit of thrift by the encouragement of deposits in the village bank, by insistence on the punctual payment of *Kists* (instalments), and by the introduction of share capital with village societies. [*Ibid.*]

them. Oppression there was in India even before the British, but such fear and terror seldom existed in the past.<sup>33</sup> In his rejoinder to the Government's communique of 6 February 1922 "extolling the merits" of British rule in India Mahatma Gandhi had openly and frankly without fear of successful contradiction stated : "The scale on which this lawlessness has gone on in so many provinces of India puts into shade the inhumanities that were practised in the Punjab if we except the crawling order and the massacre at Jallianwalla Bagh was a clean transaction compared to the unclean transactions described above and the pity of it is that because people are not shot or butchered, the tortures through which hundreds of inoffensive men have gone through do not produce sufficient effect to turn everybody's face against this Government. But as if this warfare against innocence was not enough, the reins are being tightened in the jails. We know nothing of what is happening today in the Karachi Jail, to a solitary prisoner in the Sabarmati Jail and to a batch in Benaras Jail; all of whom are as innocent as I claim to be myself. Their crime consists of constituting themselves trustees of national honour and dignity. I am hoping that these proud and defiant spirits will not be bent into submission to insolence masquerading in the official garb. I deny the right of the authorities to insist on high souled men appearing before them almost naked or pay any obsequious respect to them by way of *salamming* with open palms brought together or subscribing to the intonation of 'Sarkar ek hai'. No God-fearing man will do the latter, even if he has to be kept standing in stocks for days and nights as a Bengal school-master reported to have been, for the sake of the dignity of human nature.... If there is the slightest exaggeration in the statements that I have made I shall as publicly withdraw them and apologise for them as I am making them now. But, as it is, I undertake to prove

33 For further study see the *Report of the Punjab Sub-Committee of the Indian National Congress*, I, pp. 58 and 158. Also see statements of Gandhiji, Sarojini Naidu, Sankaran Nair and others published in *Young India* (1919-22), pp. 88-9, 97 and 113 and *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru* (Orient Longmans Ltd., 1971), Vol. I, P. 177.

the substance of every one of these charges if not the very letter and much more of than before any impartial tribunal of men or women unconnected with the Government.... It is the physical and brutal.... treatment of humanity which has made many of my co-workers and myself impatient of life itself, and in the face of these things I don't wish to take public time by dealing in detail with what I mean by abuse of the common law of the country."<sup>34</sup>

Except the political prisoners of well-to-do families who were provided a number of facilities in prison, others always complained of the treatment accorded to them by the jail authorities. Particularly those who were engaged in revolutionary activities were very critical of the prison management. One of them, Shaukat Usmani, in the course of *hijrat*, had been imprisoned by the Amir of Bokhara and the Turkoman reactionaries in September-October 1920. After his return to India he was again imprisoned by the British authorities on the charge of organizing a Bolshevik "conspiracy". In his memoirs written recently he compared the jail treatment of two different political systems. He said :

Incidentally, it is only fair to mention here that while thrown into prison in Turkoman we were fed on the same kind of food that the Turkoman themselves used to take—and this was their treatment of the "slaves"! But compared to this when we entered the British prisons in India we longed to be the prisoners of the Turkoman rather than to be the captives of a "civilised government" which treated the freedom fighters of India worse than Indians treated their cattle.<sup>35</sup>

Shaukat Usmani was arrested in May 1923. He was imprisoned at Peshawar—a favourite place for shaddy proceedings, there being no journalists or public opinions. Here he was kept for more than a fortnight, not at Peshawar itself, but

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34. *Home (Political) Department, Government of India, File No. 489/1922, p. 16.*

35. Shaukat Usmani. "India and Russian Revolution", *Mainstream* (New Delhi), 15 July 1967, Vol. V, No. 46, p. 27.

at the police thana at a nearby village. From there he was compelled to walk each day to the police station at Peshawar and back, a distance of 15 miles, in bar-fetters, without the usual leather-guards. His legs in consequence bled profusely. He was not unchained even at night.<sup>36</sup>

To prevent the manifestation of national aspirations the bureaucracy also promulgated many special ordinances like the Seditious Meetings Act, banning all public meetings.<sup>37</sup> Midnight raids on the Congress and Communist offices, destroying away their records, forcible possession of office property, extracting of penalties, spying by a host of C.I.D. men and uniformed policemen, threatening of villagers, arrest without warrant of those defying official Acts, were some of the practical results of these ordinances. Occasionally, there occurred a conflict between the district officer and the local Congressmen. The latter were necessarily opposed by the former who waged a sort of surreptitious civil war with the nationalists of his region—the very persons whom, according to the legislation of the British Parliament, he was advised to be training in the technique of self-government and to whom he was, sooner or later, to transfer political power. In fact the district officer often pondered not how much he could hand over to people but how much he could cling to.

Quite peculiar was the logic of the British rulers to sustain their rule in India. Briefed by the bureaucrats one Langford James, prosecution counsel in Meerut 'Conspiracy' case, charged in his opening address that the accused communists believed in "Long Live Revolution" and a revolution which they conspired for, and which they had visualized, was not a "national revolution". It was "anti-national revolution". There was no question of their being nationalist. Their activities were anti-God, anti-family and

36. Shaukat Usmani, *Peshawar to Moscow* (Benarus, Swaraj publishing House, 1927), p. IV.

37. *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru* (Orient Longman Ltd, 1972), Vol. I, P. 192,

anti-everything decent and calculated to kill all religions of the world.<sup>38</sup>

It was reserved for the English prosecutor to excite the particular odium that a revolution is ordinarily an incident in time it happens. It is done away with, and it gives place to that brighter and better state of things which, any way in the minds of its authors, it is destined to usher in.<sup>39</sup> From this logic it appeared that the British bureaucrat would not mind if this type of revolution occurred anywhere. But this was not actually the case, as is evident from the political developments of those days. No sooner the nationalists like Gandhiji started their non-cooperation campaign—their non-violent national revolution, no time was lost in charging them of engaging in “seditious” activities and “taking the law and order situation in their own hands.” They were found to be violating the constitutional framework set up for Indians. However, when the Moderates operated within that constitutional framework and attacked some administrative measures of the colonial authorities violating the spirit of constitution, they were charged, “You are not well-versed in constitutional affairs; you have not yet acquired the legal experience and constitutional expertness which can properly understand the complex of constitutional matters.” Thus there was no end to the logic of an Imperialism trying to justify its *locus standi* of exploitation by hook or by crook.

It may be recalled that in every struggle of peasantry or working class for the redemption of its legitimate rights either from the foreign government or the feudal classes and money-lenders or the capitalists the bureaucracy intervened in favour of the latter. In this way there was lack of evidence in the spheres of economic justice. The masses were told orally that to use a *charkha* was against the law, to shout “Gandhi ki Jai” was a heinous crime, to sign the membership

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38. Home (Political) Department, Government of India, File No. 10/XI/1929, pp. 34.

39. *Ibid*, p. 3.



form of a political party was illegal, etc. People who had signed were threaten with prosecutions.

The Civil Service let the economic man of Adam Smith do what he liked in his sphere if he did not disturb the administrator's peace. It did not like to meddle with the interests of the privileged classes economically well-entrenched, who served as centres of support to the alien-controlled state. An offshoot of this support in the economic sphere was also the perpetuation of the social tyranny by the upper conservative classes on the lower caste people. On the other hand, the bureaucracy lathi-charged the peaceful processions of peasants and forcibly dispersed their meetings, arbitrarily arrested them and prosecuted for an indefinite period of imprisonment. It rarely tried to look after the pattern of intolerable economic relations existing between the social classes in India. For instance, early in 1921 the peasant population of Rae Bareilly and Fyzabad districts in the U. P. suffered several hardships from the oppression of the landlords who levied illegal cesses with the connivance of the ruling authorities. Instead of eradicating the grievances of the poor peasants the administrative and police authorities of the two districts sided with the rich landlords and thus oppression went on unabated, till the exasperated tenants took the law into their own hands. They refused to pay the illegal and extortionate taxes, and on being harassed by their landlords, revolted. They were dispersed by police and military fire which inflicted serious injuries on the peasants.<sup>40</sup> Columns of cavalry, artillery and infantry were marched through principal areas and people had to supply *rasad* etc. to troops. It is somewhat cumbersome to give a proper idea of hundred and one techniques by which the bureaucracy had attempted to crush the peasants. In Sultanpur and Partabgarh districts hundreds of *panches* and *sarpanches* were sent to jail or had been made to ensure security. The usual charge levelled against them was : "You are leaders of Kisan Sabha and you compel people to attend

40. For further study see *Indian Annual Register, 1921-22 (Calutta)*, Vol. I, pp. 144 (a) -144 (c).

it." There was no end to suppression. Even the barbers and washermen, socially essential for the peasants, were not spared. Besides, in the *taluka* of Oudh thousands of peasants were in jail. From each district of this *taluka* five to seven hundred peasants were in jail. From the district of Fyzabad alone, there were about 600 persons. Besides these another five to seven hundred men were already in custody; their trials had not taken place nor their cases heard. Dirty food and water was supplied to them, and this spread disease that killed many of them. Outside the jails the peasants were terrorized at their doors by the policemen and government servants from morning to evening. This had made their life intolerable. Besides, a number of political workers were sentenced to imprisonment for distributing a leaflet *Kisanon Ko Sandesh* issued by the U.P. Kisan Sabha above the signature of Motilal Nehru, the President of the Sabha.<sup>41</sup> In spite of all this suppression the peasants, however, moved ahead undaunted. "The Kisans have awakened", wrote Jawaharlal Nehru in an article published in *The Independent* (Allahabad) on 23 January 1921, "from their long slumber and all the king's horses and all the king's men will not frighten them or keep them back from their goal."<sup>42</sup> Exhorting the masses in a meeting arranged at Jhansi on another occasion on 13 June 1921 Nehru had said :

To live in this country means to live in utter slavery, to lead the life of beasts....This means that Indians, living in India itself, will crawl on their bellies and will rub their noses against the ground, will be humbled.... Only *swaraj* is the remedy of these evils....We cannot under any condition put up with it. We shall not take rest till we have removed the British government and attained *swaraj*....You shall stand by non-co-operation<sup>43</sup>.

In the Chauri Chaura case more than two hundred peasants were implicated and accused of participating in the

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41. *Selected works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, n. 37, pp. 190, 192-93 & 197-99.

42. *Ibid*, p. 214.

43. *Ibid*, pp. 177 & 193,

disturbances. In the course of the sessions trial in 1923 the majority of them were condemned to executions and others to long terms of rigorous imprisonment. This judicial behaviour of colonial rulers was vehemently condemned not only by the Indian nationalists but also by the Executive Committee of the Communist International (ECCI) and the Red International of Labour Unions (RILU), both of whom supported the colonial movement against Western Imperialism. In a joint appeal issued on 14 March 1923 these two international bodies stated:

Imperialist justice has condemned 172 men in India to death....The ferocity of this judicial murder is unsurpassed even in the bloody history of British rule in India. Since 1919 India has been the scene of mass murders and brutal repression. Beginning in Amritsar, British imperialism has freely made use everywhere of tanks, bombs, machine-guns, and bayonets to smother the rebellious people in streams of blood.<sup>44</sup>

Referring to the nature of the Chauri Chaura movement the joint appeal characterized it as a revolt directed against both the native landlords and the alien government, "who together suck the peasant's blood."<sup>45</sup> The signatories of the joint appeal believed that the movement was a gigantic mass demonstration with nationalist slogans and under nationalist leadership. They also took note that in spite of the fact that before the provocation by the police the demonstration was quite peacefully led by such nationalist leaders who believed in the victory of non-violence, "Imperialism would not even allow a peaceful demonstration of the unarmed masses.... Imperialism is trying to smother the revolt of the colonial masses in streams of blood."<sup>46</sup>

44. Jane Degras, ed. by, *The Communist International (1919-1943); Documents* (Oxford University Press, 1960), Vol. II, pp. 12-3.

45. *Ibid*,

46. *Ibid*, p. 3.

The famous Bardoli Satyagraha is also illustrative of the oppressive character of the British regime. On ignoring the ultimatum issued by the Government to pay the enhanced rents of the revenue over 6,000 notices were issued against Khatedars owning the bulk of the land in Bardoli taluka. Lands of the value of Rs. 3,00,000 were disposed of for Rs. 1, 200,000 by the land assessment authorities.<sup>47</sup> In certain cases the doors of houses were broken open without any inquiry as to whether the door to be broken was that of a Khatedar. There were also numerous cases in which the restraints were levied before sunrise and after sunset. Articles such as cooking vessels, beds etc., seeds, carts, and bullocks which were originally exempted from attachment, were seized.<sup>48</sup> In a number of other cases the *Japti* (confiscation) officers seized the property of persons who were not liable to pay any land revenue whatever. In some cases even while selling the property so seized no attempt was alleged to have been made to find out as to whose property was being sold. In numerous cases articles restrained were sold at negligible prices, and policemen and revenue peons made bids among themselves to purchase them at the auction sales.<sup>49</sup> "Bardoli is now a scene of frantic lawlessness. The men-in-charge of the operations have thrown all decency to the winds", reported Mahadev Desai to *Young India* on 3 May 1928.<sup>50</sup> Besides, the attachment work was conducted ruthlessly. Big bags of grain were attached only to be left behind because of the non-availability of porters. The attached carts had to be driven by peons. But the oppression did not end here. Large tracts of land were declared to be forfeited. By the end of June 1928 1400 acres of land had been disposed of under forfeiture notices and about 5,000 acres more was fixed as target to be disposed of.<sup>51</sup> Sardar Patel exhorted every peasant to face firmly the

47. The figures quoted from the text of the conclusions of the *Munshi Committee*, published in *Young India*; 1927-28 (Madras, 1935), p. 1074.

48. Reference published in *Ibid*, pp. 1074-75.

49. *Ibid*, p. 1075.

50. *Ibid*, p. 1027.

51. *Ibid*, p. 1066,

bureaucratic oppression and to prefer to be "riddled by bullets and to allow his bones to be manure."<sup>52</sup> rather than allow an outsider to cultivate his fields. In the words of Ghandhiji the peasant was engaged in a "fight unto death."<sup>53</sup> A large number of peasants were arrested and convicted to long terms of imprisonment.

Not satisfied perhaps with the measures already adopted to suppress the peasants' movement, the government officials resorted to an attachment of buffaloes and moveable property. They employed hefty Pathans to assist the *Mamlatdars* and *Mahalkaris* in this work, as their former assistants *Vethias* were socially excommunicated by the local peasantry. And the hired Pathans conducted their work without restraint. The impression created by their conduct of the attachment and confiscation upon the people's mind was humorously described by a wag to Mahadev Desai thus :

Pathans to the right of them  
 Pathans to the left of them  
 Pathans to the front of them  
 Police at the tail of them  
 Marched the buffalo Brigade.<sup>54</sup>

The seized buffaloes worth hundreds of rupees were auctioned or sold for nominal prices. According to the inquiry conducted by the Munshi Committee in 76 villages the total number of buffaloes taken away was 16,611 out of which 3,801 fell ill due to the illtreatment. The total number of bullocks taken away was 13,091 out of which 442 fell ill. The total number of deaths among the animals was estimated to be 93.<sup>55</sup>

To suppress the growing working class movement the bureaucracy also introduced various repressive measures.

52. *Ibid*, p. 1045.

53. *Ibid*.

54. Mahadev Desai, *The Story of Bardoli* (Ahmedabad, 1929) p. 139

55. Conclusions of the *Munshi Committee* published in *Young India* 1927-28, n. 44, p. 1077.

Towards the close of 1928 it introduced into the Legislative Assembly a Trades Disputes Bill which was passed into an Act in 1929. The provisions of the Act were a direct attempt to crush working-class organization. The Act was divided into three parts : the first provided for the appointment of compulsory Courts of Inquiry and Conciliation Boards for the settlement of industrial disputes; the second made it illegal to withdraw labour from the public utility services, such as the Railways, Postal Service, Water and Light Supply and Public Conservancy, unless each individual going on strike gave one month's notice in writing to the Administration; and the third part declared illegal strikes which had any object other than or in addition to the furtherance of a trade dispute within the trade or industry in question, or those strikes which inflicted hardship upon the community, or were intended in the opinion of the Government to coerce the Government. The Act also prohibited sympathetic strikes and the workers of one industry supplying funds to strikers in another.<sup>56</sup>

The introduction of the Trades Disputes Bill into the Legislative Assembly met with tough opposition not only of the Left but of the Right in the labour movement. The Government labour nominee, N. M. Joshi, the most moderate of trade unionists, announced his opposition to it in the following terms :

The second part of the Bill which deals with strikes and lock-outs in the public utility service is the most controversial as well as objectionable.. I want to emphasize that the Government of India is attempting to pass legislation which is more drastic than the old British legislation of 1875.... Even eminent judges in England have admitted that although the law regarding the relation between master and servants provides for penalties for master as well as servant, the law has hardly been used against masters. Moreover, in a state of society where capitalists dominate the

56. See the Proceedings of Legislative Assembly in *Indian Quarterly Register*, 1928 (Calcutta), vol. II, pp. 170.

Government, the law is bound to be used against workers....  
I shall have to oppose the whole Bill.<sup>57</sup>

Joshi was only expressing moderately what the whole of the working class movement was thinking indignantly.

Not content with the Trades Disputes Bill, the Government introduced the Public Safety Bill. It was first introduced into the Legislative Assembly in September 1928; but it was defeated by a concerted effort of the nationalist groups, who were not only influenced by popular pressure, but were also opposed on principle to conceding drastic powers to the Government for the repression of anti-Government political movements, fearing that the Government was quite capable of using those powers against their own organizations. The speeches of Pandit Motilal Nehru and other leaders of the Swaraj Party reflected vehement denunciations of and hard hitting polemics against the autocracy of the Government and pleas for the constitutional rights of the subject. The Government was defeated by the casting vote of the President of the Assembly, Mr. Vithalbhai Patel, owing to the negligence of a member of the European group who arrived too late to vote; and the Public Safety Bill acquired even greater importance as the subject of a nationalist victory over the Government. The latter announced its intention of re-introducing the Bill at the next session, and both sides settled down to a campaign of propaganda for and against. The "Communist Menace" became the obsession of the pro-Government press; a menace of which the existence was vigorously denied by the nationalist organs. Interest in the Public Safety Bill which was rightly regarded as another attempt at draconian legislation, mounted high with the approach of the next session of the Legislative Assembly; and protest meetings against the Bill were held in every political centre throughout the country.

On 4 February 1929 the Government reintroduced the Public Safety Bill. Both the side were well ready for a

57. *Ibid*, 170-71.

showdown again. Explaining the reasons for bringing in the measure, the Home Member said :

The principle underlying the Bill was to invest the Government with the power to check the mischievous activities of persons (real or supposed Communists) coming from outside India. Industrial unrest in the country was exploited by (working on) illiterate and ignorant industrial workers especially in Bombay and Calcutta. Further, sedulous attempts were being made to bring the youth movement in the country within the orbit of communism.<sup>58</sup>

He then referred to the grave disorders consisting of lightning strikes, murderous assaults, and other "deplorable" incidents that had taken place in the last few months in the industrial areas of Bombay and Calcutta.<sup>59</sup>

The debate on the Bill was long and arduous. Dewan Chamanlal retorted to the Home Member : "The Bill was introduced in last session but was not passed. Four months have since passed but nothing like destruction of society has come to pass !" <sup>60</sup> Pandit Motilal Nehru characterised the Bill as a direct attack against Indian Nationalism and the Indian National Congress. He called the measure the Slavery of India Bill or the Safety of Bureaucracy Bill.<sup>61</sup> It was to oppose the Bill that bombs were thrown by Bhagat Singh and others in the Central Assembly in April 1929. The second reading of the Bill was passed by a majority of votes. On 2 April, however, the President, Mr. Patel, made a statement asking Government either to postpone the Bill pending the Meerut trial, or if they attached greater importance to passing the Bill at this juncture, to withdraw the Meerut Case and then proceed further with the Bill. He

58. *Indian Quarterly Register*, July-December 1929 (Calcutta), Vol. II, pp. 169-70.

59. *Ibid.*

60. *Ibid.*

61. K.M. Panikkar, *Voice of Freedom*, a collection of Pandit Motilal Nehru's speeches (Asia Publishing House, 1961), p. 372.



contended that the fundamental basis of the Bill was virtually identical with the case preferred against the 31 accused. As Government refused to comply with either of these conditions the President finally ruled the Bill out of order on 11 April 1929. Government then contented themselves by issuing an ordinance in terms of the Public Safety Bill.

The repression did not remain confined to legislation only. In industrial and textile strikes the police banned the meetings and processions of the workers, searched their houses and took away the so-called seditious and socialistic literature which preached the ideals of national independence, *swaraj* and equitable distribution of social and economic power by establishing a classless society.

But the matter did not end here. By using force over the people in mass demonstrations the bureaucracy incited the people to violence. In Rae Bareilly and Fyzabad districts of U.P. when the police and military fired on the peasants' processions in January 1921, reprisals were taken by a mob of 10,000 strong by storming the jail, burning the bazar and looting the zamindar's property at Munshigunj. On 23 January 1921, in a riot in Fyzabad district several constables were killed. Similarly, when special military measures were taken with the repeated use of violence both by the Military and the Police to break down the strike in Madras mills during the days of Non-co-operation movement the results, according to the Madras Intelligence Department, were "disastrous."<sup>62</sup> The head of the provincial intelligence reported to the Home Department at Delhi that the conduct of the strikers soon took an "ugly turn and a regular reign of violence, terrorism and lawlessness began in the Mill area."<sup>63</sup> Likewise, the whipping of Chander Shekhar Azad during the days of

62. P.C. Bamford, Deputy Director of the Intelligence Bureau, Government of India, *Histories of Non-Co-operation and Khilafat Movement* (Delhi, Govt. of India Press, 1925), p. 63.

63. *Ibid.*

non-co-operation and the lathi-charging of the anti-Simon procession at Lahore culminating in the tragic death of Lala Lajpat Rai, provoked Bhagat Singh and others to pay tit for tat. In the latter case a HSRA leaflet pasted on the walls in Lahore streets announced :

The murder of a leader respected by millions of people at the unworthy hands of an ordinary police official like J.P. Saunders was an insult to the nation. It was the bounden duty of young men of India to efface it.... Our objective is to work for a revolution which would end exploitation of man by man.<sup>64</sup>

History also took its revenge on the perpetrators of Jallianwalla Bagh. The year 1940 carries a special significance in the history of Indian national movement. Sir Michael O'Dweer, the Lieutenant-Governor of Punjab, who had approved the massacre order at Amritsar, met his doom at the hands of a young Indian by the name of Udham Singh, widely known in London circles by the name of *Baba*. The Alberty Room in the Caxton Hall of London, where O'Dwyer's murder took place, is a living memory of the revenge to the Jallianwalla Bagh massacre.

The hatred of the bureaucracy for young revolutionaries was deep-rooted. Their red-tapeism reached its climax when their class first permitted the family of V. D. Savaskar to meet the latter at Andamans after eight years, but withdrew the permission as soon as the younger brother and wife of Savarkar reached Calcutta. It was a cruel joke indeed. When one of the family members wrote to the Government of Bombay, it directed him to enquire of port Blaire. If the Commissioner of port Blaire was approached on the subject he referred him to the Government of India, if one wrote to the later it wrote back to say that the final decision rested with the Government of

64. Bejoy Kumar Sinha, "Bhagat Singh and HSRA Heard the Call of October Revolution", *New Age* (New Delhi), November 1967, p. 15.

Bombay. Things went on like this for years together. How cruel was the bureaucracy can also be judged from the fact that the elder brother of Savarkar had been sentenced to transportation for life for merely writing a pamphlet of ten pages.

In fact, a vicious circle was created. Oppression provoked disturbances and the disturbances were used for perpetuating oppression and hampering reforms. But the revolutionary nationalist was determined to bring to an end this state of anarchy. Declaring his determination Sardar Bhagat Singh in his last letter written as his testament and smuggled out of jail a few days before his hanging, affirmed :

Let us declare that the state of war does exist and shall exist so long as the Indian toiling masses and their natural resources are being exploited by a handful of exploiters.... They may be purely British capitalist or mixed British and Indian or even purely Indian. It shall be waged ever with new vigour, greater audacity and unflinching determination till the socialist republic is established.<sup>65</sup>

Still another general impression created by the presence of the bureaucrats in India was that by living aloof from the people they made the people awe-stricken, and thus enabled them and their servants to feel secure in the multitude which, if it had developed the requisite consciousness of their power and boldness to face the results, would have shaken their foundations. Sustaining himself on this psychology the bureaucrat symbolized terror to the masses, was an object of awe to the intelligentsia, and embodiment of a government (demanding national submission) to the rich. He would, therefore, tolerate nothing that had even the remote probability of disturbing that psychology. Besides, the bureaucrat tolerated bribery in the revenue staff so that the environment of terror in the creation of which the staff made substantial contributions, could prevail. Moreover, the bureaucrat was trained on how he

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65. *Ibid.*

should handle the people upon whom he was going to rule rather than how he should act for their welfare and progress. All this, of course, led to the undermining of nation's intellect, energy and efficiency, impeding educational progress, hampering the popularization of a system of national education and causing a decline of nation's industrial efficiency and scientific achievements and widespread impoverishment of the masses.

### **Monopolization of Power**

The British regime was equally adamant to keep the administrative services exclusively a British concern.

A discriminatory attitude in regard to Indians was really reflected in the administrative services. For instance, in the Railway Service, European and Anglo-Indians who were 11.42 per cent among the total population of literates in the English language in India, held 75.68 per cent of the appointments (of the upper subordinate staff drawing Rs. 250 and over on the twelve State Railways) in 1924 and 73.46 per cent of the appointments in 1925, whereas Muslims and non-Muslims, who were 88.57 per cent in the population of literates in English, had 24.32 per cent and 26.54 per cent of these appointments, respectively in the two years. Details about the gazetted officers on 31 March 1926 show that 73.4 per cent of them were Europeans, 14.3 Hindus, 2.7 Muslims, and 9.6 other classes. In India the minimum and maximum railway salaries were in the ratio of 1 : 444, in Japan 1 : 22, in China 1 : 32, in Germany 1 : 11, in France 1 : 12, in Denmark 1 : 5 and so on.<sup>66</sup>

The same discriminatory position was reflected in the appointment of Indians to the Secretariat of the Government of India and the various local governments. The following tables<sup>67</sup> for 1921-22 provide the necessary figure :

66. *Modern Review* (Calcutta, 1927), vol. XLI, p. 653.

67. Tables quoted by V. S. Srinivas Sastri in his address delivered at the annual session of the National Liberal Federation of India, held at Nagpur on 27 December, 1927, *Speeches and Writings of Sastri*, p. 7, p. 336.

Table 1

## GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

Secretaries including		
Joint Secretaries	13	1 Indian
Deputy Secretaries	13	3 Indians
Under Secretaries	5	1 Indian

Table II

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT

	Secretaries	Dy.Secys.	Under Secys.	Total	Indians
Assam	4	0	2	6	1
			(1 Indian)		
Bengal	9	2	2	13	Nil
Bihar & Orissa	6	0	5	11	3
	(1 Indian)		(2 Indians)		
Bombay	9	6	3	18	2
		(1 Indian)	(1 Indian)		
C. P.	3	0	3	6	2
			(2 Indians)		
Madras	8	1	7	16	7
	(1 Indian)		(6 Indians)		
Punjab	7	0	10	17	2
	(1 Indian)		(1 Indian)		
U. P.	9	4	5	18	4
	(1 Indian)		(3 Indians)		
Total	55	13	37	105	21
	(4 Indians)	(1 Indian)	(16 Indians)		

In the beginning of August 1922, Premier Lloyd George proudly pointed out in the House of Commons that 1,200 Britains were actually governing 315 million Indians. With the addition of 700 British police officers the total number of India's rulers rose to 1,900 white men<sup>68</sup>, said Lloyd

68. Speech and figures cited by *Young India*, 10 August 1922; *Bombay Selection from Newspapers*, July-December, 1925, p. 772.

George about this achievement, "There is hardly anything that is comparable in it in the history of the world. The British have reason to be proud of this miracle." In this same well-known "Steel-frame" Speech he asserted that the Civil Service must continue to be British whatever might happen in India.<sup>69</sup>

Indians were no exception to the usual rule. They watched with displeasure the power which should be handed over to men of their class, in the control of foreigners. They raised a storm of protest and clamoured that the British Premier should apologize for his I.C.S. Speech. S. A. Dange's *Socialist* also joined the issue on 26 August 1922, and it wrote: "The storm over the Premier's speech has not cooled down." But at the same time the paper expressed inability to understand the demand by those quarters that the Premier should have expressed regret and apologized for what he said. Lime-lighting the *real politik* of British rulers the paper believed that the Premier had spoken the truth that was in his and his government's mind. It added that to tell him to apologize in speaking what he honestly felt was certainly telling "Mr. Lloyd George to be more Georgian, for to speak what one honestly thinks is un-Georgian in Britain! To give lesson to Mr. George in 'Georgism' is certainly presumptuous!" Moreover, the paper added that when Indians asked the Premier to apologize, they must first think what powers they had to compel him to do so, if he refused. The paper continued:

He is the Premier of a Nation that is building two battle ships, after the disarmament conference; he is a man who can command a fleet of airships at a moment's bidding. To compel him to apologize, we must have something more than a mere printing press and paper to write an editorial demand for apology!<sup>70</sup>

69. *Ibid.*

70. *Bombay Selection from Newspapers*, (Home Department, Government of India), July-December 1922, p. 863.

On the same day the paper quoted Karl Marx's definition of the Government: "It is nothing but an executive committee to manage the affairs of the bourgeoisie."<sup>71</sup> Commenting on the same issue on 22 August 1922, the *Shakti* wrote :

Mr. Lloyd George's recent speech on India shows that Government regards Indians as no better than beast whom it can treat in any manner it likes. The grant of the Reforms is considered by it a great favour conferred on India, which may be withdrawn if that country does not give a good account of itself. We think it is an extremely helpless condition, brought on by long subjection . . . that has emboldened Mr Lloyd George to use the language he has used. The time, however, is not far distant when the British will have to retire from this country.<sup>72</sup>

Indians also limelighted and criticized the extravagancy of emoluments paid to the British officers in India. In his presidential address delivered at the first session of the All-India Trade Union Congress held at Bombay in November, 1920 Lala Lajpat Rai alleged that the Government "sweats its lowest service in a way as perhaps no other government on the face of the earth does."<sup>73</sup> In fact he challenged the British Government to show him any other country in the world which paid its higher civil and military service anything like the salaries the Government of India did. According to his estimation in the whole of the United States there was only the President who got more than Rs. 25,000 per annum. In Japan, even the Prime Minister did not get that amount. In the United States the lowest salary allowed to a clerk or a porter in government office was from about 1,000 to 1,200 dollars a year; the honorarium allowed to a cabinet minister was 12,000 dollars a year; in India a cabinet minister got Rs. 80,000 a year besides allowances while his orderly got only Rs. 120 a year, or at the most 180.<sup>74</sup>

71. Ibid, p. 881.

72. Ibid, p. 864.

73. Lajpat Rai, *India's Will to Freedom* (Madras, 1921), p. 169.

74. Ibid, pp. 169-70.

In fact, in calculating the requirements of a civil servant, the Government of India showed a great deal of generosity, providing for the education of his children and the luxury of travelling to and from Europe. All these privileges were added to by presents. But he did not allow the "grinding poverty" around him and the fact that he and his predecessors were responsible for it.

The elected members of the Assembly brought these shortcomings of the administration to the notice of the Government in 1923 in the Assembly. Considerable attention was devoted to the question of Indianisation. In the debate on a resolution to establish the principle that recruitment for All-India Services, except those of a technical character, should be made in India, the House accepted a Government amendment that enquiries should be made from the provincial Governments on the measures possible for the increased recruiting of Indians for the services. In fulfilment of this promise, the O'Donnell circular was issued, which formed one of the incidents leading up to the appointment of a Royal Commission on the Public Services, under the chairmanship of Lord Lee of Fareham in June 1923.<sup>75</sup>

The Report of the Commission was published on 27 May, 1924. In regard to the future organization, the recommendations centred round the plan of entrusting to local governments the future recruitment for the services operating in the transferred spheres of education, agriculture, veterinary, forests (in Bombay and Burma), and of certain branches of engineering. The Secretary of State adopted these recommendations. The Commission further proposed that the control of certain services should be transferred from the Secretary of State to the Government of India, and that for the services which would remain on an all-India basis, and under the ultimate control of the Secretary of State, a large increase in the proportion of Indian recruitment should take place. This recommendation

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<sup>75</sup>, See *India in 1923-24* (Calcutta, Govt. of India, 1924), pp. 96-7.



too was accepted by the Secretary of State and it was envisaged that in future the proportion of Indian recruitment to the Indian Civil Service and the Indian Service of Engineers will be 60 per cent; to the Indian Police Service 50 per cent; and to the Indian Forest Service 75 per cent.<sup>76</sup> The commission also made financial recommendations.

It is undeniable that such measures taken by the British rule paved the way, though on a limited scale, for the educated Indians to train themselves with administrative responsibilities and to gradually substitute the British bureaucrats after the attainment of national independence. In the post-independence era these Indian civil servants were one of the powerful elements that maintained the national integration in tact. But there was the other side of such political developments too. Indians recruited to the Civil Service during British rule were nothing but an instrument of perpetuating the British rule in India. However much patriotically they might have cherished national independence, their official responsibilities restrained them from giving open expression to their patriotic sentiments. But sycophants among them did not hesitate to consider it a matter of pride to express their allegiance to the British Raj on whose mercy they depended for their livelihood.

Resuming the subject of immediate study, Indian leaders generally severely criticized the recommendations of the Lee Commission. It is to be noticed that responsible criticism made by the intelligentsia concentrated itself on certain aspects. It criticized the Commission for its failure to recommend an Indian in place of a European basic pay-rate for the services, on the ground that one consequence of the continuation of the existing standards would be to deprive India of the financial relief which might otherwise have accrued from increasing Indianization. Secondly, it was pointed out that the Public Services in India constituted a survival of the pre-reform days; and that no amount of minor modifications would adapt them to play their part in an India which longingly cherished *swaraj*.<sup>77</sup>

76. *India in 1924-25*, pp.65-6.

77. K. M. Panikkar, n. 59, p. 67.

The recommendations of the Commission were also debated in the September session of the Assembly in 1924. The official motion put forward by the Home Member, Alexander Muddiman, to endorse in principle the main recommendations of the Commission, was challenged by the leader of the Swaraj Party, Pandit Motilal Nehru. He moved an amendment which, after detailing the dissatisfaction of the Assembly with the genesis and operation of the Commission, pleaded that the House was unable on the material before it to satisfy itself of propriety and reasonableness of the recommendations, but would nevertheless be prepared, if recruitment were stopped outside India, to consider the alleged grievances of the present incumbents of the services and to recommend such measure of redress as a Committee elected by the House recommended. A heated debate lasting over half a week followed. Barring the European elected members and certain independents, the majority of opposition opinion in the House displayed positive hostility to the recommendations of the Commission. Pandit Motilal Nehru, in particular, maintained that the present constitution of the Indian Services was "an anachronism, and the Government was attempting the impossible task of working a reformed constitution by means of an unreformed administrative machine."<sup>78</sup> Continuing his speech he condemned the concentration, in the hands of administrative cadres, of the control of policy. He also asserted that it lay with the Assembly to define the power of permanent officials and to lay down the conditions of their recruitment and to define the policy which they must execute.<sup>79</sup> The official standpoint was strongly pleaded by the Home Member and his other colleagues in the Government. Certain representatives of European non-official opinion too strongly supported the official position. Nonetheless, the Swarajist amendment was carried by 68 votes to 46.<sup>80</sup> But the Government had still another instrument to defy the popular verdict. It succeeded in reversing it in the Council of

78. *Ibid.* p. 318.

79. *Ibid.*

80. *Ibid.*

State which after a prolonged debate and the rejection of several amendments passed the official resolution without division.<sup>81</sup>

The attitude of Government was disapproved by the nationalists. It was generally felt that power was still where it was before 1919. To recognize a government which defied vote of censure passed by the united efforts of the nationalists, certified every demand rejected by the legislature at the arbitrary will and advice of the bureaucracy thus making the parliamentary control over administrative development illusory and ineffective, was out of the question for any self-respecting Indian. It showed that practically the Civil Service was the Government and the State. The very talk of it was undignified, humiliating and derogatory to his nationalism.<sup>82</sup> The more radical a nationalist, the more bitter was his criticism of the bureaucrats.

The Indian point of view was supported by Earl Winterton. Concluding his India Office vote speech in the British Parliament in 1923 he declared that all other countries had an independent status in global politics, but the "big Indian elephant" was "tied to the tail of the British lion" and went wherever it was "dragged". There was not a single country in entire Asia of which people suffered chronic starvation like India. There prevailed "emasculating peace" of a peculiar nature. Only it was disturbed constantly by dacoities, occasionally by Dyerian exploits, and often by "pacific feats" of the police.<sup>83</sup>

The renowned British writer, Aldous Huxley, who was on a tour of South Asia at about this time in 1924, too marked a sharp anomaly in the administrative and political structure of India. In his travel diary he observed that nowhere was

81. *Ibid.*

82. See the speech of Lala Lajpat Rai on 27 March 1926 at Lahore, *Indian quarterly Register*, January—June 1926 (Calcutta), Vol. I, p. 59.

83. An extract taken from the speech published in *Modern Review* (Calcutta, 1923), Vol. XXIV, p. 119.

the contrast between old and new more striking than in India. Humanitarian feelings with regard to men had been introduced superficially from outside. He remarked:

Old and new strangely coexist and India is ruled in accordance with two completely incompatible theories of government: that of Akbar, shall we say, and that of Woodrow Wilson. On Monday the watchword of the Executive is "Reform and Responsible Self-Government". Like *Oliver Twist*, the Indians immediately ask for more... and the Government nervously decides to be firm. On Tuesday some General Dyer rivals the exploits of the Moguls; repressive legislation is passed, the gaols are crowded. On Wednesday the Government is seized with conscientious qualms; remembering what Mr. Gladstone said in 1882 and why the Great War was fought, makes a generous gesture; the response is so unenthusiastic that it becomes necessary on Thursday to suspend the Habeas Corpus Act and imprison several thousand suspects without a trial. By the end of the week, everybody, including the Government itself is feeling rather muddled.<sup>84</sup>

Despite the considerable harm done to India by the bureaucrats there were conservative leaders like Churchill in England who eulogized their rule. They were, in his view, above self-interest. They depended for their existence upon the uncontrolled authority conferred on them. If that authority was discredited or hampered and broken up, "measureless disasters would descend" upon 350 million "perfectly helpless poor folk."<sup>85</sup>

### **Resignation by Indians**

But Indians repudiated such a view. With the inauguration of the Non-Co-operation Movement in 1920, Mahatma Gandhi and the Indian National Congress appealed to Indians to resign their I.C.S. jobs. A number of people responded.

84. Aldous Huxley, *Jesting Pilate* (London, 1927), pp. 56-7.

85. Winston S. Churchill, *India and other Speeches* (London, Sec. edition), pp. 77-8.

Among them was Subbas Chandra Bose who had secured the fourth position in the I.C.S. examination held in 1920 in London. Disclosing his intentions in this connection to his elder brother, Sarat Chandra Bose, he wrote on 22 September 1920 :

After all is service to be the end-all and be-all of my life ? The Civil Service can bring one all kinds of worldly comfort, but are not these acquisitions made at the expense of one's soul. I think it is hypocrisy to maintain that the highest ideals of one's life are compatible with subordination to the conditions of service which an I.C.S. man has got to accept.<sup>86</sup>

### **Racial Superiority**

Though as a result of persistent harping by Moderates and Extremists since the opening decade of the present century against the nostalgic concept of racial superiority displayed by the British rulers in India it had ceased to manifest publicly, it continued to dominate the subconscious mind of those British officers and military men who, in their childhood, had been nurtured in the public nurseries in England designed to produce future Empire-builders. This sub-conscious mind conditioned by imperialistic tendencies but blocked inevitably by the growing political and nationalistic consciousness in Indian people could helplessly find no other suitable course to ventilate itself than the official files and records reserved for confidential remarks which were circulated only among the Empire-builders. And it was no less a person than the British Commander-in-Chief in India, General Lord Rawlinson who exploited this novelty to the full at the time of Moplah upsurge not only to establish the validity of age old Indian saying : India was won by Indians from Indians for the British, but also to hide the fighting incapacity of the British soldiers. In his demi-official letter, dated Simla,

86. Subhas Chandra Bose, *An Indian Pilgrim* (Calcutta, 1948), pp. 128-30.

4 October 1921, written to the Home Member, William Vincent he disclosed his mind thus :

I shall be glad when the Burmese and Gurkha troops reach the area, for I do not like wasting good British blood on such scum as these Moplahs. When they do arrive I propose to withdraw the bulk of the British troops, leaving only a nucleus there.<sup>87</sup>

To satiate their imperialistic lust in the garb of divinity these military generals and bureaucrats literally subscribed to the view held by the Bishop of Oxford about colonial India, "God has entrusted India to us to hold it for Him, and we have no right to give it up."<sup>88</sup>

Though the idea had become an integral part of British rule since its very inception, it was given to Rudyard Kipling, chronicler of colonial India, to deepen its impact on the mind of British rulers. As George Orwell pointed out, Kipling had sold himself to "the British governing class, not financially but emotionally"<sup>89</sup>, and in turn went out as a super-salesman to convert others to the cause of the Empire through the medium of his literature. In his writings he was to interpret with greater zest the words of Bishop of Oxford. True to the ideal of an imperialist he realized that to present this idea forcefully, he must portray the heroism and self-sacrifice of Englishmen working in India for the Empire. He tried to show that theirs was not an easy task, for they had to battle against superstition and violence and had to deal with "the lesser breed without the law."<sup>90</sup> Kipling glorified the Empire-builder, whose excellence increased with corresponding emphasis

87 *Moplah Disturbances in Malabar*; Home (Political) Department, Government of India, File No. 241/Part No. 1-A/1921, p. 42.

88. Richard Congreve, *India*, a pamphlet published in 1857 (London, 1907), p 14.

89. Dickens, Dali and others; *Studies in Popular Culture* (New York, Reynal & Hitchcock, 1946), p. 160.

90. "Recessional", *Rudyard Kipling's Verse*, Definitive Edition (New York, Doubleday Doran & Co., Inc., 1945), p. 327.

on the strange and uncongenial environment in which he had to carry out his task. The conversion of followers to the cause of Empire became an obsession with him.

Thus it was he who made the English people consider the Empire a sacred trust. He invested the idea with a new power and position of exploitation by expounding the doctrine of the "White Man's Burden." Most of his Indian writings can be considered an amplification and interpretation of this vicious and poisonous doctrine. He made use of an Old Testament philosophy of history, describing the English as the chosen people of God for His service in His cause. For him Imperialism became shamelessly a sentiment rather than a policy; its foundations were moral rather than a dictum.

Following the footsteps of Kipling the Imperialists laid stress on the superiority of Anglo-Saxon race. But, let it be remembered that the Empire-builders could not cherish a savage contempt for anyone without its being quickly reciprocated and censured. Indians did reciprocate and censure. No better time could be availed of by them than the occasion of the arrival of the Simon Commission or what was indignantly called the All-White Commission. In great sarcasm the *Modern Review* published a parody to Rudyard Kipling's poem, which was entitled "The Dark Man's Burden". Some of the lines quoted from the same make an interesting reading:

Load up the Dark Man's burden...  
 Send forth your Sons in armor  
 To beat the naked down—  
 Make plain to furthest heathen  
 Where Christian banner Swings,  
 That "Freedom's little finger  
 Weighs more than lions of Kings."  
 Our Dark shall bear the burden  
 Our White will take the pay  
 And Medicines standing ready  
 For him who says us "Nay".

\* \* \* \*

Train up those sons in armor  
 Their glorious path to seek,  
 To boast of White Man's honor  
 And lie but to weak;  
 To use "our native allies"  
 To build those sons' renown,  
 And when they've served your purpose  
 They turn the rebels down  
 For Dark must bear the burden,  
 While White will take the pay.  
 And cord awaits the traitor  
 Who dares to say us "Nay".<sup>91</sup>

Some of the Indians met this concept of racial superiority by contemptuously nicknaming the British as "Western Monkey," in leaflets issued during the intensive phase of national liberation struggle.<sup>92</sup>

In the course of his forty-five years of reporting in every part of the world and editorial writing for *The New York Times* Herbert K. Mathews keenly observed these changing attitudes, capacities, emotions, ambitions and expectations of the people in India and other parts of Afro-Asian world. In his review of the political situation on the eve of the retirement he recalled those hectic days when nationalism became the most powerful of all emotions and motives in the destruction of empires and the transformation of the colonies. The connotations of racial superiority, the White man's burden, imperialism, paternalism — all of them looked to him as phony as Mussolini's fascism turned out to be.<sup>93</sup>

### India's Position in the Empire

But the causes of Indian discontent were not confined to the internal affairs of India. The condition of Indians overseas

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91. "The Dark Man's Burden", *Modern Review* (Calcutta), December 1928, XLII, p. 687.

92. Home (Pol.) Department, File No. 137/1921, p. 51.

93. Herbert K. Mathews, "Looking Back", *The Times of India* (New Delhi), 8 October 1967, p. 10, cols. 2-3.



was a matter of serious concern. There were many ways, felt an Indian, of insulting a dependent country. One of them was to talk of India being an equal partner in the Empire. It was a British Empire, yet Indians were supposed to be equal citizens in it.<sup>94</sup> At the meetings of the Imperial Conference the Indian representatives had brought into notice the incongruity prevailing in regard to India's status. At the Imperial Conference held in 1921, Srinivas Sastri complained, he could not fail to remember that the position Indian representatives occupied here was not comparable by any stretch of imagination to the position occupied by their colleagues from the Dominions. They were called there by virtue of their being Prime Ministers. Indians came by nomination from the Government of India. Indians realized that this marked a great difference in their status.<sup>95</sup> The humiliating anomaly was again brought into notice at the Imperial Conference held on 23 October, 1923 when Mr. Fitzgerald (New Foundland) stated:

Putting myself in the position of India, I do not think Indian representatives here are of an equality with us, because they are not really here in a representative capacity. They are not really sent by an independent Indian Government, and they cannot be really regarded as equal with the rest of us.... This hyper-sensitiveness that they have about

94. India's representation in the Imperial War Conferences, with a nominee from British India and one on behalf of the princes, opened up the possibility of India's recognition in her external relations as a single entity. A resolution of the Imperial Conference of 1918 made a specific reference to the reconstruction of the British Empire after the War, with the Dominions and India assigned a new status with increased functions. India's admission into the League of Nations was in partial recognition of such a status. Participation in the League of Nations, in the International Labour Conference and other organisations developed an outlook in India with visible repercussion on the growing sense of national unity embracing both provinces and princely states.

95. *Cmd. 1474 of 1921*, p. 33.

their treatment outside India arises really from the fact that they have not, so far, reached the degree of Self-Government that the rest of us have reached.<sup>96</sup>

It had thus become fully clear that India, despite attractive show of her place in the Imperial Conference and her membership of the League of Nations, had in the last resort no deciding voice of her own. The Government of India was controlled by the India Office, and the India Office was a subordinate department of the British Government at White Hall. On significant issues the British Cabinet decided what India would be allowed to say.

India had protested against the continuation of this incongruity. In a number of resolutions and speeches the public leader brought to the notice of the British Government and other members of the Commonwealth the economic discrimination in the land laws and granting of trade licences, offensive railway rules and refusal of municipal franchise. In the 1923 session of the Indian National Congress Dr. Ansari made the satirical remark : "slaves cannot be free slaves."<sup>97</sup>

### **Racial Discrimination in South Africa and other Colonies**

The racial apartheid faced by the people of Indian origin in South Africa, a member of the British Commonwealth, and other colonies and dominions also came to be discussed at the Imperial Conference on 23 October, 1923. The Indian representatives made eloquent speeches vindicating the right of their people. It was very much with them a matter of national sentiment and feeling. It was of vital importance in so far as the national prestige of the Indians was concerned. The position of Indian settlers was degrading, due to the negation of natural development which had been inflicted upon India.

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96. 'India in the Imperial Conference', *Indian Review* (Madras, 1923) Vol. XXIV, p. 695.

97. *Report of the 38th Session of the Indian National Congress held at Cocanada in December 1923*, p. 173.

Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru and the Maharaja of Alwar complained of a humiliation which “cuts to quick our national pride and our new consciousness, permeates and sours our whole outlook” in regard to imperial partnership. Both of them complained of the diminution of their own value in their own eyes. It appeared to be nothing short of an affront to their self-respect and honour. According to Sapru the feeling on this question was deep-seated and widespread. All Indians, to whatever political, social or religious group they belonged and whatever their domestic quarrels, were absolutely united. “Any inequality of the Indian nationals”, said Sapru, “enters like an iron into our souls.” He also pointed out that there was not a man either among the princes or the humblest subjects who did not attach great importance to the question of *Izzat*. “When *Izzat*...is at stake, we prefer death to anything else.”<sup>98</sup> “Nothing hurts more”, said the Maharaja of Alwar, “than the loss of *Izzat*....It is that one word which is the keynote of half the troubles of the world.”<sup>99</sup> Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, interpreting the concept of *Izzat*, stated that he was fighting as a subject of King George “for a place in his household and I won’t be content with a place in his stables.”<sup>100</sup> The Maharaja of Alwar also stated, “Indians in search of enterprise left their homes and their shores to find refuge in parts where freedom, justice, peace were symbolized in trident red, white and blue.”<sup>101</sup>

In its 40th Session the Indian National Congress opposed the proposed legislation known as the Areas Reservation and Immigration and Registration Bill. In its opinion it was the breach of Smuts-Gandhi Agreement of 1914, that it was racial in character and was calculated to make the position of the settlers much worse than it was in 1914. Deploring the new development Mahatma Gandhi stated:

98. “India in the Imperial Conference”, *Indian Review* (Madras 1923), Vol. XXIV, p. 690.

99. Ibid.

100. Ibid.

101. Ibid, p. 692.

The Bill that is hanging like a sword of Democles over the heads of our countrymen in South Africa is designed not merely to heap greater wrongs upon their heads but virtually to expel them from South Africa.<sup>102</sup>

During this time, by publishing his Autobiography, Mahatma Gandhi also brought into light many facts of the discrimination faced by the people in South Africa. He recorded President Kruger's answer to an Indian delegation which had gone to see him in order to plead for just treatment of Indian traders:

You are the descendants of Ishmael and therefore from your very birth bound to slave for the descendants of Essu. As the descendants of Essu we cannot admit you to rights placing you on an equality with ourselves. You must rest content with what rights we grant to you.<sup>103</sup>

Criticizing this approach Mahatma Gandhi stated that it was the English section of the white residents of South Africa which had been the strongest critics of the ideal of the equality of mankind. It was among the English colonists in Natal that the Indian immigrants faced humiliation and disgrace. It was also the British merchants of Johannesburg and the Transvaal towns, who most strongly demanded from the Transvaal Government the persecuting the Indians.<sup>104</sup> Likewise, Tagore, a little earlier than the appearance of Gandhiji's book, wrote:

The only important question for the white man of South Africa is how indefinitely to grow fat on ostrich feathers and diamond mines, and dance jazzy dances over the misery and degradation of a whole race of fellow beings of a different colour from their own. Possibly they believe, that moral laws have a special domesticated breed of comfortable con-

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102. *Report of the 40th Session of the Indian National Congress held at Cawnpore in 1925*, p. 24.

103. M.K. Gandhi, *Satyagraha in South Africa* (Madras, 1923), p. 56.

104. *Ibid.*

cessions for the service of the people in power. Possibly they ignore the fact, that commercial and political cannibalism, profitably practised upon foreign races, creeps back nearer home....For, after all, man is...not a mere living money-bag jumping from profit to profit, and breaking the backbone of human races in its leapfrog of bulging prosperity.<sup>105</sup>

In the 1924 Session of the Congress the delegates called upon the people not to treat the racial arrogance and prejudices as merely an academic question. In the restrictions and ostracization inflicted on Indians there were the illustrations of national humiliation and political degradation. The eradication of racial pride only could lead to the redress of their grievances. And they themselves could vindicate the honour of their countrymen and protect their inviolable rights by struggling and establishing their self-government at home. Only then could an Indian say to the government practising apartheid: "At your own peril shall you touch the hair of my brother and only at your risk shall you dare to challenge the manhood of the Indian race."<sup>106</sup> In her speech at the session Mrs. Sarojini Naidu exhorted Indians not to remain so unpatriotic that their countrymen abroad go on "eating the bread of slavery."<sup>107</sup> In her speech she declared:

Thus far and no further shall tyranny be over the people who are the blood and the bone and the flesh of the people of India....I said to General Smuts...to General Hertzog, "When you take your people back, then speak to me that you are taking my people back and not till then. Not even then shall my people be moved by force or fraud from this land where the bones of their fathers are testimony to the

105. Rabindarnath Tagore, "East and West," *Modern Review* (Calcutta), September 1921, Vol. XXX, p. 181.

106. Comment by Mrs. Sarojini Naidu in a speech delivered at the Thirty-ninth session of the Indian National Congress held at Belgaum in 1924, *Report of the Session*, p. 100.

107. *Ibid*, p. 102.

wealth of the white man. They have contributed to the wealth of the country by the sweat of brow of the workers in your plantations, and still they have built up gold upon gold, victory upon victory, power upon power, to tyrannise over the hands that feed you.<sup>108</sup>

108. *Ibid*, p. 100.

## B—NATIONAL POLITICS

*Our primary concern...would be to gain independence through a corporate effort. A nation is never the private property of any individual or a community; nor would it be possible in India for any of the communities or classes, Hindu or Muslim, Capitalist or Labourer, to attain swaraj independently....I, therefore, refuse to believe that the peasants and the workers, as organized communities, are in any way hindrances to our movement for swaraj; rather I unhesitatingly and openly agree that without their close cooperation dream of independence would be reduced to a mere day-dream.*<sup>1</sup>

*[Presidential Address delivered by Subhas Chandra Bose at the All-Bengal Youth Conference held in December, 1927, In Quest of the New (Calcutta, 1947), pp. 122-23].*

### **Moderate Intelligentsia**

Before the Gandhian era the Indian National Congress represented only those sections of the Indian intelligentsia which belonged to English-knowing classes. For a majority of them, if not for all, the concept of nationalism did not go beyond bookish knowledge acquired from the works of English writers. Except for Tilak and other patriots like Dadabhai Naoroji and Surendra Nath Banerjea<sup>1</sup> who championed the

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1. It may be recalled that Surendra Nath Banerjea created much political consciousness especially among the intelligentsia by his political tours of 1876-78 and by his writings and speeches

cause of Indian freedom and underwent suffering the leading intellectuals were Moderates. Most of them were engaged in a constitutional struggle which demanded as its essential quality the skill in debate and eloquence in speech. They acted as if country would achieve independence by the well-intentioned resolutions passed by a small caucus of intellectuals more interested in discussion than action. Apart from a few protests made at small meetings, they met once a year in the session during the last week of December and they eulogized it as the week of sacrifice.

According to Pattabhi Sitaramayya this was the age of intellectualism when the learned lawyers entering politics regarded it as a duty to obtain *swaraj* on the plane of intellectuality through the aid of argumentation, "by filling, we may say, a suit for *swaraj* before the House of Commons, free of stamp duty and legal fees." He also contended that some of these intellectuals even thought that they would obtain a decree for India together with *mesne* profits.<sup>2</sup> In fact, their education, constitutional convictions, and above all, instinctive class origin, prevented them from challenging the 'merits' of alien rule. All they wanted was that the foreign rule should acquire a representative and national character, that is, if they could be included in its functioning. The political postulates of this narrow circle of rich intellectuals failed to change the material and intellectual conditions of the masses who had begun to lose faith in constitutional methods, and hence they were incapable of enlisting the support of the latter. As a result the intelligentsia forfeited the leadership of the national movement. It had to happen because they tried to blindly imitate the British Liberals without realizing that the latter were operating in an independent country with an abundant imperialist heritage rather than in a colonial possession.

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2. Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *History of the Nationalist Movement in India* (Bombay, 1950), p. 40.



### Gandhian Era

However, with the beginning of year 1919 India stood at the cross-roads. Constitutionalism was dead. But silent acquiescence was impossible. At this juncture there emerged on the Indian political scene another kind of intelligentsia whose source of political inspiration was outside the British polity. They derived their intellectual convictions primarily, if not totally, from the intellectual heritage of Russia of both pre and post-Bolshevik era.

It is interesting to record that some sort of strange analogy can be traced in the socio-political conditions of Russia under the Czars in the beginning of twentieth century and those of India in the post-Rowlatt Act days. Like the pre-Bolshevik Russian developments the Indian conditions were quite favourable for the growth of bourgeois nationalist and working class movements led by intelligentsia. A considerable section of Russian intelligentsia remained isolated politically and socially from the feudal and capitalist classes which (particularly the former one) had a big hand in the state apparatus controlled by the autocratic Czars. Therefore, this section of intelligentsia was more susceptible to a demand for revolutionary changes. Likewise, with the minor exception of those who were selected to the Civil Service or employed in clerical jobs without responsibility and certain others, the Indian intelligentsia too was mainly not associated with the British regime controlled from White Hall and backed by the Indian feudal class in general and the mercantile class spasmodically. In fact, the penetration of Indian intelligentsia in the government was considered a violation of the prerogatives of the British bureaucrat. If the *Czarist* regime had rejected the Russian intellectuals considerably depriving them of their rights to share in power and treating them like superfluous man, the British Government had also behaved in a manner tantamount to the same. The more isolated from political power the Russian and Indian intelligentsia, particularly the younger element in it, felt in their own respective countries, the

more radical and nationalistic their outlook and programme to change the prevailing conditions was bound to be.

In Russia, Count Leo Tolstoy denounced the monopolisation and accumulation of political power and wealth by Czar and his few subordinate classes as immoral. He held that it was contrary to divine law to employ hundreds of minding machines in factories so that a few could wallow in riches by exploiting the helplessness and poverty of the many. To eliminate the oppressive system he expounded the then strange utopian doctrine of passive resistance.<sup>3</sup> In the course of his stay in South Africa Gandhiji read Tolstoy's writings relating to this doctrine and felt they had a "highly cheering effect"<sup>4</sup> on him. He hoped that every Indian would "welcome them and allow them to guide his conduct."<sup>5</sup> Some years later when he led the struggle of Indians in South Africa against *apartheid*, he synthesized Tolstoy's doctrine and the traditional Indian values like soul force to resist evil. Describing his struggle being fought on these lines of passive resistance he wrote a letter to Tolstoy.<sup>6</sup> And the latter approved Gandhiji's technique of resisting oppression in his reply.<sup>7</sup> At some distance of time Mahatma Gandhi, with a considerable number

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3. For further study see *The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (The Publications Division, Govt. of India, 1963) Vol. IX, p. 243.

4. *Ibid.*

5. *Ibid.*

6. *Ibid.*, pp. 444-46.

7. In his reply Tolstoy had written :

I have just received your most interesting letter, which has given me great pleasure. God help our dear brothers and co-workers in the Transvaal! That same struggle of the tender against the harsh, of meekness and love against pride and violence, is every year making itself more and more felt here among us also, especially...in refusals of military service.... I greet you fraternally."  
[*Ibid.*, p. 483].

It is interesting to note that in the course of imprisonment in the Transvaal struggle Gandhiji got an opportunity to read some books

(Footnote contd.)

of his followers, was to apply the same technique in a much more polished form in his struggle against British Imperialism in India.

There was, however, gradually growing another section in Indian intelligentsia which felt spellbound by some other political developments taking place in Russia during World War I. No sooner did the Bolshevik Revolution take place than it cast its influence on this section of Indian intelligentsia whose already existing radical views got further impetus. It watched with keen interest the destruction of the Czars and the growth of a new power of the people determined to save their rights—to live freely and happily without being exploited and victimized by the wealthier classes.<sup>8</sup> Many a Congressman saw in Lenin and other Bolshevik leaders great champions of freedom, who appeared to possess remarkable skill for organizing and utilizing the lower class masses for the seizure of political power to the benefit of all oppressed. His name and teachings exercised a powerful influence over the anti-imperialist Congress leaders of those days, who were struggling to strike a new path for achieving the liberation of India. Two books of Lenin *On Imperialism* and *State and Revolution* kept Leftwing Congressmen spellbound. In particular, Lenin's analysing of Imperialism gave these intellectuals a real insight into the working of

(Previous footnote contd.)

by Ruskin and the essays of Thoreau. He could trace the doctrine of *Satyagraha* in the writings of these two philosophers. (*Ibid*, 181-82). A little earlier in September 1907 in his journal *Indian Opinion* he made an appreciative appraisal of the doctrine of civil disobedience as enunciated by Henry David Thoreau. Commending this writing to the Indian community in South Africa he wrote: "Both his (Thoreau's) example and writings are at present exactly applicable to the Indians in Transvaal." [*The Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi* (publications Division, Govt. of India, 1972), Vol. VII, p. 217.

8. Intelligentsia in Bengal, which was one of the classic homes of militant anti-imperialism, was profoundly stirred by the Bolshevik achievements, Drawing an illuminating sketch of the Soviet State

(Footnote contd.)

British domination. The same book also made it clear that revolutionary socialism as advocated by Lenin and other Marxist leaders—rather than the British Labour Party which had repeatedly betrayed India—was a faithful ally of their liberation struggle against imperialism. Besides, Lenin's proverbial saying<sup>9</sup>—that British Imperialism would meet its doom not on the banks of the Thames but on those of the Ganges and the Yangtse—came out as a thrilling declaration for the radical Congressmen. They were also impressed by the declarations made by some of the Communist leaders at the Congress of the Eastern people at Baku. In a speech delivered at this Congress Zinoviev referred constantly to the struggle against English imperialism : “We are ready to help any revolutionary struggle against the English Government....Our task is to help the East to liberate from English imperialism...Our task is to kindle a real holy war against the English and French capitalists.”<sup>10</sup>. In the same Congress Radek told the delegates they “need fear no enemy; nothing can stay the torrent of the workers and peasants of Persia, Turkey, India, if they unite with Soviet Russia....Soviet Russia can produce arms and arm not only

(Previous footnote contd.)

as early as June 1919, the influential monthly *Modern Review* wrote : “We are at last given an insight into the mighty efforts of the Revolutionary Russia to organize herself and work out her communistic ideals....In fact the Bolshevik is striving to make Russia better and nobler than anything she has ever been.”

9. Referring to this gigantic struggle of human emancipation Lenin had written on 2 March 1923 in *Pravda*:

In the last analysis, the outcome of the struggle will be determined by the fact that Russia, India, China etc. account for the overwhelming majority of the population of the globe. And it is precisely this majority that during the past few years, has been drawn into the struggle for emancipation with extraordinary rapidity so that in this respect there cannot be slightest shadow of doubt what the final outcome of the struggle will be. [V.I. Lenin, *The National-Liberation Movement in the East* (Moscow, 1957), p. 315.]

10. Jane Degras, ed. by, *The Communist International, 1919-1943, Documents* (Oxford University Press, 1956), Vol. I, p, 105,

its own workers and peasants, but also the peasants of India Persia, Anatolia, all the oppressed, and lead them in a common struggle and a common victory.” He contended that their common enemy gave them a common cause. “The Eastern policy of the Soviet Government is thus no diplomatic manoeuvre, no pushing forward of the people of the East into the firing line in order, by betraying them, to win advantages for the Soviet Republic....We are bound to you by a common destiny: either we unite with the people of the East and hasten the victory of the Western European proletariat, or we shall perish and you will be slaves.”<sup>11</sup> It is also to be remembered that the same Congress issued a manifesto to the peoples of the East. After listing Britain’s misdeeds and cruelties the manifesto called on them “to rise as one man for the holy war against the English conquerors...Rise, all of you, against the common enemy, imperialist England.”<sup>12</sup> A little earlier at the VIII Congress of the Russian Communist Party, held immediately after the foundation of *Third International*, Bukharin said: ‘If we propound the solution of the right of self-determination for the colonies...we lose nothing by it. On the contrary, we gain....The most outright nationalist movement...is only water for our mill, since it contributes to the destruction of English imperialism.’<sup>13</sup>

The Soviet Union thus became the great hope of radical congressmen. This was clearly limelighted by Lala Lajpat Rai in his presidential address delivered to the first All-India Trade Union Congress in November 1920. After referring to the fact that the truth in Europe was of two kinds: (a) capitalistic and governmental truth represented by persons like Winston Churchill and the papers like the *London Times* and the *Morning Post*; (b) socialistic and labour truth represented by the labour organs like the *Justice*, *Daily Herald* and *Soviet Russia*, Lalaji said “The Government of India wants us to swallow the first kind

11. *Ibid.*

12. *Ibid.*, p. 106.

13. *Ibid.*, p. 138.

of truth without knowing the other side. Unfortunately for us truth is no longer truth. It is qualified by capitalism and imperialism on the one hand and socialism on the other.... My own experience of Europe and America leads me to think that socialistic, even Bolshevik, truth is any day better, more reliable and more human than the capitalistic and imperialistic truth."<sup>14</sup>

Above all, it was Jawaharlal Nehru among the contemporary leaders who was most impressed by the Soviet achievements. Although he had also certain reservations of his own about the Bolshevik ideal, it is a fact that he was among those selected individuals who did a lot to popularize the Soviet system in the minds of Indians through his famous book *Soviet Russia* and other writings. Welcoming the Soviet developments even as late as 1946 in an article published in *Asia in the Americas* he declared that although, like Americans, the Russians were not a new people yet "there has been a complete break from the old, like that of death, and they have been reincarnated."<sup>15</sup>

### *Non-Co-operation Movement*

The brutal behaviour of the colonial rulers at Jalianwallah Bagh and the backing out of the promise made by the British Prime Minister, Lloyd George, in regard to the Turkish Caliphate, paved the way for the combination of the above-mentioned two currents of Indian intellectualism in the great movement of non-co-operation against their common adversary. Referring to this unity of two currents at a distance of time on the occasion of his first visit to Soviet Union after independence Jawaharlal Nehru had said: "Nearly simultaneously with the October Revolution guided by the great Lenin we in India entered a new stage of our struggle for freedom. Our people had been in the course of many years engrossed in this struggle and endured the grim oppression with courage and patience. Al-

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14. Lajpat Rai, *India's will to Freedom* (Madras, 1936), pp. 76-77.

15. Remarks quoted by *The Hindu* (Madras), 5 February 1946, p. 3, col. 3.

though under the leadership of Mahatma Gandhi we waged our struggle along different path, we admired Lenin and we were influenced by his example.”<sup>16</sup>

It is interesting to note that with the advent of Gandhiji and a number of other nationalist-minded intellectuals like C.R. Das, Motilal Nehru, Hakim Ajmal Khan, the Ali brothers, Dr. Ansari who belonged also to the upper middle classes like most of the Moderates in national politics, the whole technique of the struggle for national emancipation changed considerably. *Swaraj* was not to be attained by “scoring lawyer’s points or forensic eloquences.”<sup>17</sup> Leaving aside the occasional and regional demonstrations like those of during the anti-Partition Movement in Bengal led by S. N. Banerjea and those of Maharashtra organized by Tilak and in Punjab by Lajpat Rai, the political movement had outgrown the stages of sheer propaganda and entered an active and sometimes also uncompromising fight. The new intelligentsia provided an effective shape to the struggle by organizing demonstrations, processions, public meetings and suspension of business against the promulgation of the obnoxious measures of Government like the Rowlatt Act, though it abhorred in its typical *bourgeois* style the violent aspect of the agitation. Nevertheless, it was again this new leadership that protested effectively against the typical imperialist response—massacres in the Jalianwallah Bagh. Unusually soft-spoken, Gandhiji now spoke in the voice of thunder, articulating the volcanic anger of India’s millions: “This satanic government cannot be mended; it must be ended.” The new intelligentsia under the leadership of Gandhiji challenged the very existence of alien rule by launching the Non-Cooperation Movement on an unprecedented mass scale, though the tools used to attain the objective lacked rational explanation and

16. “Tributes to Lenin by leading Indians” Anand Gupta, ed., *India and Lenin*, a collection of writings on and by Lenin (New Delhi, New Literature, 1960), p 50.

17. Comment made by Jawaharlal Nehru at the U.P. Provincial Conference held on 27 October 1928, *Indian Quarterly Register* (Calcutta, 1928), Vol. II, p. 437.

right historical perspective. Maulana Mohamed Ali claimed that the entire output of the Congress in the first generation of thirty years, could not equal the work it did in the three sessions of Amritsar, Nagpur and Ahmedabad and the special session of Calcutta.<sup>18</sup> In the words of the Maulana himself, the new age put to an end at least for a time, the "sham, hypocrisy and cant"<sup>19</sup> of the political meetings. There was no longer an excess of speeches laboriously prepared during the preceeding night, full of sound and fury and perhaps signifying nothing. There was much determination and earnestness in the decisions of the Congress, as they gave a message of resistance to imperialism. They were meant to be implemented by hundreds of determined cadres. The turn seemed to have come for facing dangers and hardships and inviting risks. Besides the desire to paralyse the administration, there appeared to be the direct aim at the removal of "our own paralysis," so believed Maulana Mohamed Ali.<sup>20</sup>

It is, therefore, significant to remember that although the Indian National Congress due to the nature of its leadership, organizational framework, ideological concepts, plans, programmes and techniques of movement adopted in various phases, was the instrument of the upper classes to benefit their own class motives, it was also the main medium reflecting the anti-imperialist national-liberation urge of the politically advanced Indian people, the main basic point of the political discontent of all classes of the indigenous social organism except the pro-British native princes and feudal, semi-feudal landlords. Moreover, it was the main organizer and leader of all nationalist movements which occurred during the perpetuation of the foreign rule in India.

18, Afzal Iqbal, ed., *Select Writings and Speeches of Maulna Mohamed Ali* (Lahore, 1944), p. 381.

19. *Ibid*, 376. Also see M.N. Roy, *India in Transition* (Geneva, 1922), pp. 213-15.

20. *Ibid*, p. 485.



It is an undeniable fact that during Non-Co-operation movement there took place a series of incidents indicating a growing tendency to revolt and a diminished respect for the authority of Government. In fact, everything foreign was decried and despised. Serious demonstrations took place. Courts holding the trial of political prisoners were surrounded. Arrangements to convey the non-co-operators to jail in a motor car ended in fiasco. The crowd refused to allow the prisoners to enter a *videshi* (foreign) car, and the Deputy Superintendent of Police was obliged to escort the prisoners to the jail on foot, a crowd of thousands of persons escorting them.<sup>21</sup>

It was self-evident from the political behaviour of the alien regime that the loyalties, beliefs and interests of the intelligentsia had begun to diverge sharply from the old political sentiments and values. The new attitudes aimed at the transformation of the oppressive character of the British rule and to establish an indigenous and nationalist government. But the new leadership was also aware that a political enterprise that aspired to power would have to command the allegiance of a sizable number of intellectuals and professional classes, because their advanced intellects and skills were indispensable for its success. Despite the variations in the predisposition of the intelligentsia, like the writers, those employed in industries, free lance intellectuals, medical men, unemployed engineers fresh from the colleges and universities and lawyers, all felt the necessity to combine together in a national struggle against a common adversary. But, above all, were the unemployed university graduates who were also socially and economically declassed. They had been totally rejected by the existing political order. Their aspirations aroused during their college 'days by modern education and the attractive environment of the modern cities, were frustrated. They felt as if all ways to prosperity and distinction were

21. *Report on the Political Situation in India during the fortnight ending 15 May 1921, Home (Pol.) Department, Proceedings, June, 1921, No. 63, p. 18.*

blocked for ever. So they were eager to be most ruthless; those with the least to lose financially or socially were like armed fighters to whom war was 'home' and a struggle against alien domination appeared to be the success of their country. It is obvious that the more isolated the intellectuals were from the political society the more radical and messianic would be their approach towards life.

### **Collaboration of the Intelligentsia and Masses**

The Intellectual leaders of national liberation movement were fully aware of the fact that they would not succeed in their mission without the intensive support of the large numbers of people, especially those coming from the lower classes. Broadly speaking, such people could stand longer against the attack of the armed alien ruling authorities because they possessed abundant energy and were more loyal to one another in comparison to the towns people. Secondly, these classes felt particularly that they were being culturally and economically alienated from the alien forces, that the upper classes which, despite their dislike of alien rulers, did maintain some contacts either through Civil Service or professions like trade and business. Meanwhile, the poor masses had also suffered terribly. It may be recalled that, according to the Census Report of 1921, 12 to 13 millions of people belonging to the peasantry died during 1918-19 due to starvation and illness.<sup>22</sup> During the period of starvation the prices of various products mainly consumed by the peasantry rose very high. In some cases prices more than doubled.<sup>23</sup> On the other hand, according to Shah and Khambata, the British and Indian mercantile classes earned high profits due to the large stock of goods possessed by them.<sup>24</sup> Besides, the oppression by the government officials, village priests, money-

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22. *Census of India 1921* (Calcutta, 1924), Vol.I, Part I, p. 14.

23. K.T. Shah and K.J. Khambata, *Wealth and Taxable Capacity of India* (Bombay, 1923), pp. 114 15.

24. *Ibid*, p. 234. See also p.p. Pillai, *Economic Conditions in India* (London, 1925), p. 222.

lenders and lawyers, and bad crops, starvation and strengthening of the capital market (manifesting the expansion of money-economy at the cost of barter economy prevalent in the rural areas) provided better opportunities to the landlords to appropriate the petty land-holders and to ruin peasants who ploughed their lands on rent, thus lessening the property of small peasants. On one side, there increased the number of landlords from 3.7 to 4.1 in 1931; on the other the landless peasants also increased from 21.7 million to 33.5 million during the same period.<sup>25</sup>

The intelligentsia also knew by its experience that the greatest number of people available to mass movements would be found in those sections of the society, which had the fewest opportunities to participate in the formal or informal working of the existing political order. And the Indian masses had only the weakest commitments to the existing political institutions as they were debarred from exercising franchise. In Indian intelligentsia there was also Mahatma Gandhi who skilfully invoked mystical postulates and religious slogans like that of *Daridranarayana*, *Ram Raj*, resort to prayer, Inner voice and similar other feudal conceptions and devices of a feudal phase of social existence which appealed to the emotions of these backward masses. So much so that he hypnotized them on an unprecedented scale. The following extract from the Benaras Intelligence Bureau's Report is of interest : "Ghazipur (in United Provinces) reports that regular Gandhi *puja* has started there. He is prayed to for the birth of a son, etc. It is even reported that Brahmins and *Thakurs* are fasting in his honour on Wednesdays taking one meal only of a special kind of *chapati*."<sup>26</sup>

Likewise, there were other places like the Gorakhpur Division which afforded fertile soil for the growth of credulity of

25. S. G. Patel, *Agricultural Workers in India and Pakistan* (Moscow, Russian edition, 1955), p. 32.

26. *Report on the Political Situation in India during the fortnight ending 15 May 1921*, n. 21, p. 14.

this kind. In many villages bonfires were prepared with the idea that they would catch fire on the night of fullmoon through Gandhi's unseen power.<sup>27</sup> Gandhi's mystical miracles were prominent in newspapers of all shades of opinion. At Ajodhya a rumour was spread that under Gandhi's orders the river would change its course to the western bank. Big crowd assembled to watch. This caused a stampede. Another version was that the rumours represented that Gandhiji was to rise from the river, and the rush which occurred, was in order to witness this event. Some persons were knocked over in the crush.<sup>28</sup>

On the other hand, Gandhiji's counterparts among the Muslims like Maulana Azad, Maulavi Kifayat Ullah, Azad Subhani and others also played upon politically and socially obscurantist plans of issuing *fatawa* declaring it impermissible for the Muslims to become members of the Government Councils, to plead as *Vakil* before the British Courts, to read in Government Schools or to keep honourary posts and titles. Finally, it was also emphatically declared in the *fatwa* that to serve in the Police and the Army was a great sin, because they had to fire upon their brethren. Supporting their *fatwa*<sup>29</sup> on a quotation from the Quran reported to be said by God, "one who kills a Mussalman deliberately will be subjected to the eternal hell fire", and its distribution in public, its sticking in running train-carriages and distributing to the passengers along with sermonizing the Indian sepoys going on leave or travelling by trains, no doubt played an important role in inciting the people to be anti-imperialist. But this attempt at awakening only deepened the growth of communalistic tendencies in the people, which manifested very ferociously in the aftermath of

27. *Report on the Political Situation in India during the fortnight ending the 30 April 1921*; Home (Pol.) Dept., Govt. of India, Proceedings, June 1921, No. 13, p. 36.

28. *Ibid.*, p. 34.

29. For further study see *Proscription under the Indian Press Act of a Leaflet entitled "The Religious Fatwa of the Ulemas of All India"*, Home (Pol.), Dept., Govt. of India, File No. 136/1921, pp. 1-2.

non-cooperation. These preachings, therefore, lacked rational source of inspiration. This point needs explanation.

{ These preachings symptomized the growth of a reactionary philosophy. They were nothing but a restatement of the theories, beliefs, doctrines and principles which prevailed in the country in the past and were the ideal growth of the social phenomenon of those early eras. The Indian society had radically changed since then, particularly after British subjugation of India and its subsequent industrialization new social forces had emerged and grown in India } which needed altogether different philosophical connotations to explain them, to interpret them, to organize and lead them towards higher future developments. } 'Not the mystical and individualistic concepts of antiquity which the Indian political leaders preached to the masses, but the scientific and social ideologies of the modern era which could pave the way towards evolving and mustering of all historically progressive classes for winning national independence, towards a rational study, understanding and solution of the politico-socio-economic difficulties of present day India, towards the building up of a vital rationalist social culture. } A metaphysical and mystical approach towards issues of national significance prevented a right scientific dialectic materialist understanding of natural and social events and a rationally and historically justified elevation of social and political difficulties that permeated the indigenous social organism. No rational mind would deny that mysticism and subjectivism, on which the entire philosophy of Gandhism was based, were most formidable to the development of all social and rational quest for knowledge. (It is but inevitable that when mystics, saints, *sadhus* and advocates of metaphysical connotations watch the natural and social worlds up and down, they are bound to misunderstand them and point out utopian solutions of the problems thereof.)

It is, however, to be admitted that Mahatma Gandhi was a genius in formulating the programmatic statements of agitation and organization in order to associate himself acti-

vely with the struggle of peasants against the alien oppressors. He behaved in such a way that it looked as if there was no problem of the masses he did not study. There was no misery of theirs which he did not limelight, and for whose elevation he did not advocate in his interviews with officials. His championship of the peasants' cause at Champaran and the workers' strike at Ahmedabad had led to the establishing his credentials of sincerity in the cause of poor.<sup>30</sup> Still another fact how strongly Gandhiji had started feeling and interesting himself in the amelioration of the poor classes was revealed by Swami Shraddhanand in his memoirs. Instead of expressing any views on the reforms in his meeting with Montague, Mahatma Gandhi had said: "My country is awfully poor and your administration is terribly expensive. If you want to give any reward to India for service rendered during the war, do lighten the burden of taxation."<sup>30</sup> This approach of Gandhiji was aptly expressed by Tagore in the following terms: "At a critical juncture at the cottage door of the destitute millions, clad as one of themselves he stood."<sup>31</sup> Tagore described it as the expression of true love for the poor who welcomed this good gesture and his hesitation and holding back disappeared. The poet-philosopher took it as the manifestation of the real power of its spirit by the nation in all its multifarious facets. For achieving this success in display of humanism Tagore felt a great gratitude towards Gandhiji and acknowledged his "sovereignty."<sup>32</sup>

Thus one finds that no longer politics remained for Gandhiji a matter of high-level discussion among erudite politicians. It was a thing of the devoted servants of the people associating themselves with everything that was of the people. He thus became a living embodiment of rich and profound humanism, one who possessed deep emotions of love for entire

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30. Swami Shraddhanand, *Inside Congress* (Bombay, 1946), pp. 44-5.

31. Rabindranath Tagore, "The Call of Truth", *Modern Review* (Calcutta, 1921), Vol. XXX, p. 427.

32. *Ibid*, p. 428.

humanity, and whose outlook transcended the local or national spheres, whose solidarity sentiment was not merely restricted in expression to the community of the people from which they sprang but extended to all human beings. Gandhiji, from this standpoint, emerged as a nationalist *par excellence*. An impartial observer cannot overlook the fact that Gandhiji's greatest contribution to the Indian nationalist movement lay in the point that he created a mass basis for that movement. He was the father, pioneer of the first mass national liberation struggle of the Indian people after 1857. Again it was Gandhiji who exploded the illusion lovingly cherished by the Moderates that freedom could be obtained *only with the assistance and co-operation* of foreign "democracy". He was the first to gauge the importance of the role of the masses and the extra-constitutional mass action in the national liberation struggle in sharp contrast to his predecessors like Tilak and other militant nationalist leaders who did not properly appreciate their decisive importance for making the national struggle for independence effective. In fact the required political imagination to evolve a suitable programme for drawing the mass of people into the orbit of that movement such as Gandhiji accomplished, was conspicuous by its absence.

This was undoubtedly Gandhiji's progressive contribution to Indian nationalism. "The Indian people, under his leadership, became", writes one of his formidable critics, "heroic, audacious fighters for national freedom, courtiers of jails and receivers of hail-storms of bullets of the imperialist enemy. Gandhi injected the people with deep hatred for the 'Satanic' British government and with an unquenchable thirst for national freedom. Gandhi was the highest expression of nationalism.... Subjectively he incarnated the very spirit of nationalism, its profound hatred of foreign enslavement and heroic will and determination to end that enslavement."<sup>33</sup> The same author, nevertheless, qualified his statement by stating that due to his

33. C. G. Shah, *Marxism, Gandhism, Stalinism* (Bombay, Popular Prakashan, 1963), pp. 291-92,

social origin, education and all other earlier experiences, as also due to *bourgeois* class influence though he developed progressive nationalist outlook, *ideologically* he could not transcend the *bourgeois* limitation of that outlook. Not that Gandhiji was aware of the class *motif* behind his ideology. His class inhibition prevented him from being aware of the *bourgeois* class nature of his ideology. He invested it with an absolute non-class character. In spite of his consummate genius, he remained the "prisoner of his fundamental class illusion."<sup>34</sup> It looks that Gandhiji sincerely believed that a happy, prosperous, joyous national existence could be built up on the basis of a capitalist social system, which should behold the trusteeship theory.<sup>35</sup> He, however, forgot that Christ drove the money-lenders from the temple of Jerusalem and they returned. Buddha prohibited his disciples from even having more than two pieces of cloth. But before his very eyes, his principle disciple murdered his father for the throne. Likewise, giant millionaire disciples of the Mahatma fired on the workers when they demanded a share from the great profit-hoards of these "trustees". And to atone their sins, they all constructed temples, mosques and churches. And a stage arrived when in sheer disillusion even Gandhiji had to lead the Ahmedabad textile strike. If an impartial observer looks at the big uproar that has gripped this country at present against the undue power of the big *bourgeois* monopolists and the seventy-five "trustees" of substantial national wealth, one can easily imagine what has been the fate of the trusteeship theory. ) It is, however, heartening that Mrs. Indira Gandhi has begun to wipe out these citadels of financial power gradually but inevitably.

(As the alternative to the upper class system Gandhiji saw only social chaos and here he was very much mistaken. Like Shakespeare, who recognized and exposed the atrocities committed by the early systems based on exploitation in a few of his sonnets and immortal dramas but whose mind could not

34. Ibid, pp. 292-93.

35, Ibid, p. 293,



transcend this framework of a capitalist approach, Gandhiji, too, in the modern century, recognized and denounced in bitterest language the inhuman character of *bourgeois* exploitation. Unfortunately, he could not find a proper solution. There is no doubt that Gandhiji loved the poor. But he also believed in the capitalist social framework. He indefatigably, tirelessly worked to eliminate the misery and misfortune of the poor but within the framework of that exploiting system---a task which was next to impossible to be accomplished in the given historical situation in which undeveloped Indian political system was operating. He, therefore, emerged as an apostle of humanized social relations between classes and not the propounder of ending the class framework of society itself. That is why, he was characterized by an eminent scholar of Marxism as a "bourgeois humanist of the noblest type."<sup>36</sup>

Like Gandhiji there were others, such as Jawaharlal Nehru, who popularized the cause of masses by touring extensively in the villages, taking meals with the peasants, living with them in their mud huts, talking to them for hours together and often addressing their meetings. He had the halo of a modern prince who had sacrificed wealth and leisure for the elevation of the lot of the masses. Due to such tenacious activities Jawaharlal Nehru acquired a genuine fame only slightly less than that of the Mahatma. Even Sir Evan Scott, President of the Bengal Legislative Council (1922-25) admitted that he had "undoubtedly captured the ear of 'Young India.'"<sup>37</sup> He preached a Peasants Republic and advocated the confiscation of all large estates. His conception of *swaraj* was a form of government in which there would be no place for the exploiting classes. For holding such views he was contemptuously referred by some English members of the Indian administration like F. G. Pratt and Sir Evan Cotton as a "Trotsky with an Oxford voice" whose "education had been Completed in Soviet Russia."<sup>38</sup>

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36. Ibid, p.295.

37. John Cumming, ed. by, *Political India 1832-1932*, a collection of writings (Oxford University Press, 1932), p. 193.

38. Ibid, pp. 192 and 220.

Within the Congress intelligentsia there was not only Nehru but also a group which was influenced by the radical ideas. It pleaded for the abolition of economic inequalities by the equitable distribution of wealth, abolition of landlordism, prohibition of alienation from land, reduction of land revenue and removal of the indebtedness of the peasantry. To make Indian people aware of the deplorable conditions of the masses this intelligentsia wrote analytical essays and composed verses.

The advocacy of this radical programme succeeded to a greater extent, at least during the days of non-co-operation and the salt *satyagraha*, in creating an impression in the minds of the peasantry that these upper middle class leaders of the Congress were their reliable friends. So in any programme chalked out by the Congress leaders they readily collaborated. Referring to this political development Jawaharlal Nehru writes : "We found the whole countryside afire with enthusiasm and full of a strange excitement. Enormous gatherings would take place at the briefest notice by word of mouth. One village would communicate with another, and the second with the third, and so on, and presently whole village would empty out, and all over the fields there would be men and women and children on the march to the meeting place....Their faces were full of excitement and their eyes glistened and seemed to expect strange happenings which would, as if by a miracle, put an end to their long misery."<sup>39</sup>

This should, however, not be forgotten that while the humanism in Nehru brought him nearer to radical socialism to plead the cause of the poor, his switching to liberalism at a later stage took him away from the path of radical socialism. Nevertheless, he continued to inspire the people to build a better and greater India. Through his slogans like "*Aaram Haram Hai*" he exhorted to gird up their loins. His appeal was welcomed by those sections of Indian people who were engaged in

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39. Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography* (London, 1936), pp. 51-2. See also *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru* (Orient Longman, 1971), pp.205-17,

ceaseless and strenuous toil as workers, peasants, land labourers, teachers, clerks, mechanics, engineers, doctors, pedlars and numerous other working groups and derived miserable incomes not enough even to meet the elementary requirements of life. Then there were millions of unemployed who were callously denied the fundamental right to work by the prevailing upper class social structure. In such conditions a moral patriotic sermon was applicable only to that microscopic minority of rich classes, who sustained itself by exploiting the labour of the poor. This class of idlers could be drawn within the circle of productive labour by expropriating their ownership of means of production. This could be the only condition of changing them from lazy, exploiting, parasitic human beings into creative pillars of society. Although Jawaharlal Nehru tried to do a good work in this direction during his long tenure of seventeen years of Premiership and rarely there was a speech in which he did not talk of socialistic pattern of society, yet he was excessively hampered by the feudal and *bourgeois* interests led by the Rightists in the Congress.

However, the situation took a different turn with the emergence of Mrs. Indira Gandhi on the Indian political scene as Prime Minister. During her father's regime she was not a passive onlooker. She was rather closely watching over the intruders who were holding her father's movements in the progressive direction. Moreover, the angry and violent defiance of the Congress by the general mass of people during 1967 General Election was also an eye-opener. No sooner, therefore, she got an opportunity during the Presidential election of Mr. Giri, she wiped out of the Congress most of the obstructing elements. She is dealing with the rest by removing them from the citadels of power one by one. What came across strongly during this crucial period was her will of iron. She drew her strength from some inner resource. Taya Zinkin, no stranger to Mrs. Gandhi, described her in the *Evening Standard* (London) recently as "three times the man her father, Jawaharlal Nehru was."<sup>40</sup> Particularly, she became very popular when

she won the last Lok Sabha election in 1971 with a thumping majority by raising the slogan of "garibi hatao" (eradicate poverty) and subsequently by introducing Constitutional Amendment on Fundamental Rights and by introducing legislation on abolition of Privy Purses and by nationalizing some monopoly concerns. Thus she helped in deepening the already broadened revolution and reminded us of the arrival of Mahatma Gandhi in Indian politics in 1920. Due credit should also be given to the coalition governments formed in some states with the help of communists and socialists. In their short tenures they adopted certain progressive measures to ameliorate the lot of people.

### **Capitalist class in the Non-Co-operation Movement**

The progressive participation of the capitalist class (which had become objectively opposed to imperialism not permitting free industrialization) in the Non-Co-operation Movement was symbolized by the active co-operation of Seth Jamna Lal Bajaj and others. In a speech delivered at the 1920 Nagpur session of the Congress he stated that he considered it to be the proudest occasion in his life, when a person like himself "unworthy and unfettered" in his usual vocation of banking and business had been all allowed the proud privilege to "worship at the highest altar of Motherland."<sup>41</sup> Exhorting the members of his class which appeared to him to have remained rather "listless towards national *yajna*" he said that they too had certain grave responsibilities towards their country and they should realize them at a time of such a national crisis. Due to the denial of unfettered access to the enterprise of trade and industrialization, they should look upon the organization of the Non-Co-operation Movement as the only available and most helpful instrument to put pressure on the alien-regime. In conclusion Seth Jamna Lal Bajaj also pointed out :

40. Cited in *the Statesman* (New Delhi), 31 October 1971.

41. *Report of the Proceedings of the annual session of the Congress held at Nagpur* (Nagpur, 1920), p. 86,

If you fail at this moment, you not only will bar for ever the way of real enterprise for your progeny but will also stain your soul by the sin of neglecting an evident duty which you owe to your country and people. But if taking the offerings of your wealth in your hands you will come forward to feel the flames of this sacred national *Yagna* you will be contributing to its completion and success and will thus be glorifying for ever yourselves and your people.<sup>42</sup>

### Class Collaboration for Swaraj

Considering the attributes of all the participants in the Non-Co-operation Movement one finds that they came from every stratum of Indian society---some princes with patriotic sentiments like the Maharaja of Nabha; indebted and heavily taxed, poverty-stricken peasants with insufficient acres of land to cultivate and above all, oppressed and exploited by the zamindar's *karindas*; virtually discontented industrialists and mercantile classes; commercially impoverished shopkeepers and traders; exploited and overworking artisans and labourers; unemployed white-collar clerks and *babus*; lawyers and writers with nationalist background and the patriotic college and university young students. Inspired by the ideal "let there be no distinction between rich and poor, high and low they are all bed-fellows in adversity" every class appeared to be feeling that without mutual surrender there was no hope for their distressed country. All these became more or less united on the political platform of the Congress to attain their common object. Wishing them success poet Tagore sent the following message once :

May your mission ... be fulfilled in...directing our love and service to the real cradle of the people, where our great Mother's milk for her children has run dry, where life is waning and the light of joy is nearly extinct.<sup>43</sup>

42. Ibid, 92.

43. Message delivered by Rabindranath Tagore to the Fortieth Congress Session held at Kanpur in 1925, *Report of the Session*, p. 3.

**Communist View**

Soon after the outbreak of the First World War, a young underground revolutionary of undivided Bengal left the country, in disguise, to secure arms for overthrowing British rule in India. After extraordinary adventures in Japan, U. S. A. and other countries he escaped to Mexico where he broke with militant nationalism and adopted Marxism. On the invitation of Lenin he went to the Soviet Union. That was M. N. Roy, one of the most brilliant intellectuals of modern India. Besides keeping himself engaged in the international Communist Movement he drank deep of the philosophy of Marxism and historical materialism. His interest, however, was not that of a mere scholar. The political developments in India, particularly those following the Amritsar massacre, viz. the inauguration of the Non-Co-operation Movement by Gandhiji, were what attracted him. Applying the maxims of historical materialism to these situations, he wrote on the suggestion of Chicherin his famous book *India in Transition* when the Gandhian Movement was at its climax.

The book was an instant success. After the writings on India by Karl Marx and Fredrick Engels it was the first work reviewing the national movement on the basis of historical materialism bringing out the first realistic picture of modern India to some extent for the discerning reader. For the first time India was analyzed not only as the country of Gods and Saints, but also as the habitat of mortal beings who had their sorrows and sufferings, hopes and aspirations, the same as their kind all over the world. The book was important not only because it brought into the limelight the misrule of foreign autocracy ( which was the reason why it was proscribed soon after its secret arrival in India from Berlin ) but also because it was a thought-provoking study. It was widely read. Its German edition of 100,000 copies was sold in one year. Most of the pioneers of the socialist movement\* in India had their

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\* It is interesting to remember that towards the close of nineteenth century Swami Vivekananda had begun to express his interest in socia-

(Footnote Contd.)

first lessons in applied Marxism, indeed in militant nationalism from its pages. In subsequent years it either encouraged or provoked a number of scholars and experts to deal with Indian problems on the same basis.

Advancing his study of socio-political developments and particularly of the movement led by Gandhiji, Roy held that those who are genuinely interested in national emancipation, should not collaborate with the Movement of Non-Co-operation because it served only the interests of the *national-bourgeoisie*. He also contended that the socio-political philosophy of extreme nationalists led by Gandhiji was hardest to comprehend, being hopelessly confused; that Gandhiji, however magnetic a personality, was a prophet preaching a bankrupt social gospel; that the advent of native orthodoxy in the person of Gandhiji, tickling the spiritual imperialism of extremists, was objectively impotent. He held that the *petty-bourgeois* social bearing of these extremists made them susceptible to the influence of the forces of reaction masquerading as spiritual civilization, humanitarianism, etc. Doomed to fail by the imperious verdict of history their philosophy could not infuse vitality into the national movement in spite of its more revolutionary appearance and in spite of the extremists being "rudely tossed and toppled by the great wave of popular upheaval". Their conception of the transition in India

lism. [See author's first volume of the series, p. 84]. Next to him there was Shri Aurobindo who had said in a vigorous spirit: "Socialistic democracy is the only true democracy. Each part of the community exists for the good of all, and not for its separate interests. This spirit can give humanity as a whole the necessary conditions in which it can turn its best energies to its higher development." [*Point of View*, Independence number, (New Delhi), 12 August 1972, p. 45]. However, to sharpen their weapons of fight against the British Imperialism, the Extremists were so much preoccupied with revivalism that their peripheral socialist thinking was, practically speaking, for all purposes overshadowed. The situation began to change in 1917 when the October Revolution broke out in Russia. From then onwards socialism began to have its devotees not insignificantly. [For further study see M. Ahmad, *Myself and the Communist Party* (Calcutta, 1970).

was nothing but sheer and simple revivalism. Neither a "New India" nor a "Young India" was going to emerge out of the application of the Gandhian gospel.

It may, however, be pointed out that those potential social factors which M.N. Roy envisaged on the basis of his study of historical materialism as the true instruments of a revolutionary national movement were available only in an advanced modernized society still controlled by the indigenous exploiting forces. He wrote his book, it appears, with a keen desire to equate it with Lenin's work on the Capitalist Development of Russia. The latter's book was written during the closing years of the nineteenth century with the object of combating the populist theory that the special genius of the Slavic race would prevent Russia following the way of Western capitalism. While Lenin's prediction was bound to stand true due to advanced conditions of capitalism in an independent Russia, blind imitation of the same logic in the case of a colonial and underdeveloped country like India was bound to lead to wrong conclusions. Roy's co-author, Abeni Mukarjee, displayed an over-enthusiastic anxiety to prove that India was in the throes of a proletarian revolution and therefore, must have a status in Comintern like Germany or Britain.

This does not, however, mean that the potential social factors on which Roy based his analysis did not exist in India. They did exist, but they were weak, and single-handed they could not overthrow the foreign rule. Though British Imperialism and its local feudal allies could not totally prevent the development of native capitalism, and the consequent rise of the capitalists as an ambitious class, and though the established system to some extent curbed their ambition, at the same time it is irrefutable that the Indian capitalists had no stakes in the preservation of the *status quo*. They wanted to replace it. But the Moderates, who were their leaders so far, had already shown their inability to accomplish the task of national liberation. They tended to limit themselves to constitutional reforms, attaining a formal *bourgeois*



democracy which could not provide a total break with the imperialistic system, i. e., factual and not formal independence. At this critical juncture Gandhiji came forward to fight for their demands.

Vigorous expression of extremism manifested in the terrorism of the young revolutionaries. But their conception of revolution appeared to put the cart before the horse. It attached the decisive significance on arms, and when the chance of obtaining them seemed to present itself, the revolutionaries believed that revolution was anyhow going to occur. They did not pause to consider the problem of recruiting men to carry the arms. An indispensable condition of revolution is the support of the mass antagonistic to the established order. In actual practice the number of the members of this underground party was too small to build an army of revolution. The terrorist movement had not spread beyond the circles of the middle class. Only the masses of the peasantry and working class, by activating a national front of all anti-imperialist forces, could be capable of leading a decisive, final struggle for liberation and profound democratic reforms, corresponding to the interests of the popular majority. The maturity of these people was the objective condition for a revolution. Until that basic condition was created, an attempt at national upsurge was bound to fail. Social elements antagonistic to the established order must, in the first place, be politically mobilized, trained, and enlisted in the political movement and made to struggle. Only then would arise the question of making these masses ready to struggle not only for political but also social emancipation. But these forces were still politically unconscious, ill-organized and weak, even for a purely anti-British nationalist movement.' M. N. Roy himself had the sad experience in Tashkent of imparting elementary political training to fanatically religious Indian Muslim emigrants for a national democratic revolution. Most of them remained politically undependable. In no case could they constitute a reliable force of revolution. Moreover, an incipient social dissatisfaction in India was still taking time to crystallize into a militant

force. Under colonial conditions the peasantry, the main bulk of the masses, was transforming itself inevitably into a special transitional stratum, contiguous to the working class, but still not constituting a single entity with it.<sup>44</sup> Servitude, different forms of individual dependence, the humiliations of the caste system, the economic compulsion, and other medieval remnants very strongly affected the position of the peasantry. As the highly exploited element of the colonial-cum-feudal village population without any special privileges, they were the victims of a number of contradictory characteristics. They were without land, "free workers" free of real personal freedom, mortgage of their labour, etc. On the other hand, their compatriots, the workers, were territorially concentrated. Even up to the beginning of the Second World War nearly 70 per cent of the workers were concentrated only in three industrial regions of Bombay, Central Gujarat and West Bengal. Except for a sprinkling in Kanpur, the whole of Northern India was practically without labour holds. Moreover, even the workers so concentrated, did not constitute a homogeneous community. The backwardness of social organism, the artificial maintenance of the pre-capitalistic structure of the economy, the mode of life and culture, all these factors strengthened—what to talk of weakening—within the working class many patriarchal, and sometimes purely medieval compartments. The caste barriers, the linguistic differences, the dependence on regional associations, etc. exercised a great influence on the proletariat. The complex ethnic composition of the population, the incomplete process of national-building, the extreme inequality in the socio-economic growth of the various regions and the other similar peculiarities hampered the healthy development of the working class. Multi-national and multi-tribal aspects were a significant speciality of the proletariat not only in India but

44. L.A. Gordon and L.A. Friedman, 'Peculiarities in the Composition and Structure of the Working Class in the Economically Underdeveloped Countries of Asia and Africa', T.E. Thornton ed., *The Third World in Soviet Perspective* (Princeton University Press, 1964), p. 163.

also in the majority of the industrial centres in Asia and Africa. The imperialists attempted to utilize these social and national differences to create friction in the working class movement. Last, but not least, the dichotomy of the working class was that many of its members had not yet succeeded in breaking completely from its agrarian and rural background. The work at the factories was considered only a temporary occupation.

In the process of evaluating the national freedom movement, M. N. Roy and his supporters ignored these basic social factors and were led to erroneous conclusions. They failed to provide a proper guideline to the intellectuals who were engaged in the overthrow of British rule in India. Like the French representatives of the First International, whom Karl Marx described as misguided by "Proudhonised Stirnerism", they appeared to announce that the nation as an idea was obsolete. The nations should be dissolved into "little groups" which would then form an "association" in place of the State. And this "individualization" of humanity and the corresponding *mutualism* would proceed whilst in all countries history conveniently came to a stop and the whole world waited until the individuals were ripe for social revolution.

To crown it all, Karl Marx considered of particular importance the necessity of opposing in the middle of the nineteenth century the growing influence of Russia in European affairs by re-establishing the independence of Poland on a democratic basis in accordance with the right of self-determination for all nationalities. He argued that it was true that the restoration of an independent Poland would immediately benefit three classes only: the higher aristocracy, the lower aristocracy and the clerics. But these classes would only temporarily gain. In course of time when the material conditions were ripe, these classes would be substituted by the oppressed classes of the proletariat and the peasantry. Therefore, so long as there was no possibility of a revolution in Russia itself the restoration of Polish independence offered the only

alternative of withholding Russian feudalism from sweeping Europe.

Likewise, Lenin also believed that *bourgeois* nationalism of every oppressed nation had a general democratic content which was directed against oppression, and it was this content that the communists supported unconditionally.<sup>45</sup>

Similarly, in his conversation with M. N. Roy at about this time Stalin too stressed on the importance of the national movement. He held that as long as the nationalist *bourgeoisie* led an anti-imperialist movement, they played an objectively revolutionary role, and therefore must be assisted. Not only the nationalist *bourgeoisie* in less backward colonial countries like India and China, but even the feudal lords, ulemas and mullas in the Islamic countries must be helped. That was an elementary principle of world revolution.<sup>46</sup>

Nevertheless, Roy remained adamant in his views and prepared a thesis to be tabled at the Second Congress of the Communist International in 1920. On the other hand, Lenin too put forward his own thesis,<sup>47</sup> where he laid down that Non-Co-operation Movement should be interpreted as a revolutionary mass upheaval against British Imperialism which had held colonial countries like India back in feudal conditions and the latter hindered the development of capitalism and thwarted the ambition of the native *bourgeoisie*. Historically speaking, the national liberation movement had the significance of the *bourgeois-democratic* revolution. Every stage of social revolution being historically determined, the colonial countries must have

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45. V.I. Lenin, *Selected Works* (Moscow, Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1952), pt. 2, p. 337.

46. M.N. Roy's *Memoirs*, (Allied Publishers, 1964), p. 527.

47. For further study see the full texts of Lenin and Roy cited in A.G. Adhikari, *Documentary History of the Communist Party of India* (People's Publishing House, 1971), Vol.I, pp 151-98.

48. M.N. Roy's *Memoirs*. n. 46. pp.379 and 527.

their *bourgeois-democratic* revolution before they could enter the stage of the proletarian revolution.<sup>48</sup> Although the communists should not merge their identity completely in it, yet they must support it so long as it fought against imperialism. They should not bother much about its class composition. Lenin, therefore, admonished M. N. Roy who was too much obsessed with Mahatma Gandhi's socially conservative ideology, who was deviating towards a sectarian approach to the mass movement led by Gandhiji. Lenin warned him not to paint nationalism red.<sup>49</sup> He called him to think more about the ways and means to carry forward the masses under Gandhian leadership than to bother about Gandhiji's social philosophy.

At last Lenin's view prevailed at the 1920 Congress, although Roy's thesis was also not rejected. It was left for the posterity to judge who among the two was nearer the truth.

### **Messages of Communist Revolutionaries**

Guided by the Communist International M.N. Roy had started publishing a paper *The Vanguard of Indian Independence*. Later on, the name of the same journal was changed into the *Advance Guard* and then again *Vanguard*. The leading article with which the first issue of the first periodical commenced, concluded with the following words: "We are entering a new phase in our struggle for freedom. We will no longer grop in the dark. We will no longer exhort the hungry people to suffer for some visionary *swaraj* to be attained by soul force purified in the fire of poverty. Although it will be stupid to talk of premature violence, we are, nevertheless, of the opinion that non-violent revolution is an impossibility. The Indian masses—the workers organized in Trade Unions, the peasants forming their own fighting organs in the form of the Akali Dal, Kisan Sabhas, Aikka Sabhas, etc., call for a realist orientation in our

49, Ibid, p. 345.

political struggle.” In the course of the same article the writer said: “The Government, which ruled in the interests of the foreign exploiting class must be the objective of the first onslaught....We want to overthrow foreign domination.” In other later article also occurring in one of the periodicals mentioned above it was stated: “The *bourgeoisie* has proved itself incapable, even unwilling to push the Indian movement ahead towards revolution....The element that can save the situation is yet very weak, but is not lacking. The development of this factor will ..keep the political movement for national liberation based on the revolutionary uprising of the masses, and will be able to push the unwilling *bourgeoisie* into the anti-imperialist struggle, thus utilising the little revolutionary significance it possesses.” In still other articles an outline of constructive programme was suggested: “What will be a really constructive step is not to organise Congress volunteers for picketing liquor shope, but to organize the industrial workeres into class-conscious revolutionary unions which will fight for high wages, shorter hours, better living conditions, etc. and enforce their demands by means of mass strikes to be converted into political strikes at every possible opportuntiy; to capture the leadership of the spontaneous peasant revolts by boldly giving out the revolutionary slogan of non-payment of Rents and Taxes; to organise mass resistance against the projected increase of indirect taxation; to proclaim the unconditional abolition of landlordism under *swaraj*: such are the principal points of the fighting programme which is necessary.”<sup>50</sup>

In other articles were suggested the means to make the national liberation movement effective: “Non-Co-operation can be made effective only by the revolutionary action of the workers and peasants by means of mass strikes....To prepare for this sweeping mass action, to mobilise the forces is the task of all those who want to lead the movement for national liberation forward.” “Civil Disobedience should not be passive

50 *Conviction...in Bolshevik Conspiracy Case*. Home (Pol.) Dept., Govt, of India, File No, 261/1924, pp. 108-09.

resistance to certain laws held to be 'unjust' by the Congress leaders, but a militant action of the masses." "Our object will be to create discontent everywhere against the present system, and intensify it wherever it exists. And mass strikes and demonstrations to be organised at every available opportunity to give vent to this growing discontent....Every strike, every demonstration, will develop the revolutionary determination. This is the only way of creating an atmosphere suitable for Civil Disobedience. But it can be done only by a party of the masses that will stand for the interests of the toiling masses and will provide them with that revolutionary leadership which will be steeled in the every day fight and which will not stop till the final victory is won."<sup>51</sup>

The above quotations give sufficient indication of the policy of M.N. Roy and of his periodicals and of the nature of the 'Party' whose formation the Communists like M.N. Roy advocated. In fairness to Roy, he did not make conclusions like, the Congress itself was a counter revolutionary body or the entire mass struggle under its leadership was to be condemned as a reactionary force.

### **Ahmedabad Session and Adoption of Civil Disobedience**

Such popular writings from abroad influenced considerably the leftist wing of the Indian National Congress. Above all, the unprecedented and mighty demonstrations all over the country against the visit of the Prince of Wales, a royal symbol of British Imperialism, played a historical role in preparing groundwork for the meeting of the Ahmedabad session of the Congress. The session was most important because of the possibility of a modification in the direction of radicalization of the conservative non-co-operative programme which might have well irritated and harassed the bureaucracy, might have even created a lot of embarrassment to them, yet could not shake the essential basis of imperialist rule. There was confidence and hope written on every face. Not a minute

51. *Ibid*, p. 109.

was to be wasted in idle talk which betrayed inadequate understanding of the national problems. The resolutions were addressed to the nation. They presented a programme of earnest work that had got to be done if the nation was to achieve her place in the comity of world nations. Though some Congress leaders succeeded in getting the resolution on complete independence<sup>52</sup> defeated and they as well refused to include in the programme such demands of the middle, poor and landless peasants, as cancellation of usurious debts, drastic reduction of rent, and distribution of landlord's lands among the peasants, etc., nevertheless, the resolution on individual and Mass Civil Disobedience symbolizing refusal to pay taxes to the Government was carried out. In a section of this resolution was stated:

The Congress is...of opinion that Civil Disobedience is the only civilised and effective substitute for an armed rebellion, whenever every other remedy for preventing arbitrary, tyrannical and emasculating use of authority by individuals or corporations has been tried, and therefore, advise all Congress workers and others, who believe in peaceful methods and are convinced that there is no remedy save some kind of sacrifice to dislodge the existing Government from its position of perfect irresponsibility to the people of India, to organize Individual Civil Disobedience, and Mass Civil Disobedience, when the mass of people have been sufficiently trained in the methods of non-violence or otherwise.

The Congress is of opinion that in order to concentrate attention upon Civil Disobedience, whether mass or individual, whether of an offensive or defensive character,

52. This resolution moved by Hasrat Mohani reads : "The object of of the Indian National Congress is the attainment of *swaraj* or Complete Independence, free from all foreign control by the people of India, by all legitimate and peaceful means." [*Report of the proceedings of the Ahmedabad session*, p. 36. For further study see Author's *Indian People Fight For National Liberation* (New Delhi, Srijanee Prakashan, 1972), pp. 168-74].



under proper safeguards and under instructions to be issued from time to time by the Working Committee or the Provincial Congress Committee concerned, all other Congress activities should be suspended whenever and Wherever and to the extent to which it may be found necessary.<sup>53</sup>

The Indian Communists in Soviet Russia were watching all these developments with keen interest. In the name of the Communist Party of India, which Roy had formed at Tashkent in 1920,\* an appeal was issued to the Indian National Congress, addressed to its Ahmedabad session. It stated :

If the Congress would lead the revolution which is shaking India to its very foundation, let it not put faith in mere demonstrations and enthusiasm. Let it make the demands of the trade unions its own demands; let it make the programme of Kisan Sabhas its own demands; and the time will soon come when the Congress will not stop before any obstacles; and it will be backed by the irresistible strength of the entire people consciously fighting for their interest.<sup>54</sup>

It is interesting to note that this and the other appeal issued by him to the Congress session at Gaya, a year later appeared to make a correct tactical approach to the mass movement led by the Congress.<sup>55</sup>

53. *Ibid.*

\* M. Ahmad, *Communist Party of India and its Formation Abroad* (Calcutta, 1962), p. 58.

54. Cited by S G. Sardesai, "Gandhi and the CPI", M.B. Rao, ed by, *The Mahatma—A Marxist Symposium* (People's Publishing House, 1969), p.19.

55. The appeal to the Gaya Congress chalked out a programme for national liberation which concluded: "Complete national independence, universal franchise, abolition of landlordism, nationalization of public utilities, full rights to labour to organize, minimum wages in all industries, an eight-hour day, profit sharing, free and compulsory education, and the arming of the entire people to defend national freedom." [*Ibid.*].

At about this time Amritpad Dange who was barely twenty years old, wrote *Gandhi Vs Lenin*. Due to the limited means at his disposal to get socialist literature from abroad, the publication could not become the creation of a full-fledged enlightened socialist. Nevertheless, the pamphlet had a great historical significance. It depicted the rebellious mind of the first generation of Indian youth, inspired and drawn into the mighty mass upsurge led by Gandhiji. It reflected his disillusionment with Mahatma's religious and medieval thoughts and compromising policies, and his aspiration for struggling and building a genuinely revolutionary movement. After making a distinction between the techniques of struggle evolved by Gandhiji and Lenin, he explained why the working class and its strike powers had a distinct role to play in the struggle for national liberation. He held that when peasants moved on to total non-payment of taxes, proletariat strikes alone would be able to paralyse the movement of repressive forces of Government—the army and the police—and make the non-payment of taxes successful. It is important to note that Dange emphasized the role of the proletariat, not yet from a general historical standpoint, but from the practical tasks of the Non-Co-operation Movement which was then at its climax.

Those were the times when the masses refused to be restricted in their activities. The very fact that a clarion call for revolutionary upsurge had come—non-violent though its shape was to be—made the discontented intelligentsia, peasants, artisans and working class people, to begin spontaneously a revolt against oppression. These strikes of the industrial and plantation workers and the grave discontent which began to manifest itself among the peasants, led to the growth of several revolutionary incidents which were not to the taste of upper exploiting classes. It will not be inappropriate to describe that many of the new recruits who worked for the national liberation programme lived in an atmosphere of intoxication. The feeling of fear, oppression and frustration completely disappeared. Even in the remote villages the people

talked of *swaraj*. In fact, "*swaraj* inside a year" was the idea predominating every man's mind. Mahatma Gandhi had promised *swaraj* within a year, if his programme was followed and carried out. The year 1921 was about to end and people were looking up to the political firmament to see some miracle bringing *swaraj* to them. Most of the participants in the struggle were prepared to do their best, to suffer their worst in order to hasten the advent of that mighty event. No sacrifice was considered to be too much for popular effort. Everybody was keenly anxious to implement the programme of Mass Civil Disobedience which was luring the people's mind. Though Mahatma Gandhi wanted to organize it in Gujarat, the peasants in Guntur district (Madras Presidency, at present in Andhra State) had already taken a lead by inaugurating the No-Tax Campaign with great enthusiasm and preparedness for sacrifice and suffering. This environment had not only frightened but also materially shaken the prestige of the Government. In fact, the Government of India and the Bombay Government were in dilemma. The Government of India was persistently writing to the Government of Bombay to arrest and prosecute Hasrat Mohani for advocating the cause of Complete Independence at Ahmedabad session, because they apprehended a great danger to their prestige in refusing to accept a challenge so open. His speech at the session of the Moslem League was thought to be nothing less than a clear call for the adoption of methods of violence.<sup>56</sup> But the latter were willy nilly overlooking and delaying the related arrest by arguing that such a step would be considered as discrimination against the Moslems particularly since after the prosecution of Ali Brothers no prominent Hindu leader had been prosecuted. On the other hand, the Government of Bombay vehemently insisted on the arrest

56. See the confidential note prepared by the Home Secretary to the Government of India, S.P. O'Donnell, dated 6 January, 1922, Home (Pol.) Department, Government of India, File No. 489/1922, p. 2,

and prosecution of Mahatma Gandhi in their confidential telegram dated 2 January 1922.<sup>57</sup>

The Government of India was, however, not ready to take such a step. The Home Secretary to the Government of India believed it to be a tactical error. His impression had always been that Gandhiji realized the danger of open rebellion and aimed rather at bringing about something in the nature of the general strike so often advocated by Socialists in Europe, as would make the position of Government impossible. However that might be, his immediate policy was to concentrate on the volunteers movement with the object of forcing Government to make arrests or to adopt repressive measures on such a scale as would completely alienate all Indian opinion and sweep the Moderates into the Non-Cooperation camp. It is true that the resolution framed by him carried at his instance specifically referred to Civil Disobedience, both individual and mass, but official reading of the situation was that Gandhiji did not intend then to start Mass Civil Disobedience in any other form than that of defiance of the orders regarding the volunteer associations and the Seditious Meetings Act. Moreover, Gandhiji had been careful in the resolution to emphasize the non-violent character of the new volunteer organization. The Home Secretary was cautious to point out that at that time Moderate opinion was much exercised over the action taken by Government against the volunteer associations. There was some tendency at first to recognize that Government was compelled to take step for the enforcement of law and order but the intimidation practised by the volunteers had now been forgotten; large numbers of Moderates now could think only of the numerous arrests affected; and the tendency amongst many of them, at any rate, was to regard the action of Government as an infringement of the right of public speech and of political association. If Gandhiji was arrested at such a time a prosecution, however the charges were framed, would be regarded by

57. *Ibid*, p. 3.

moderate opinion, or by a very large section thereof, as an attack on these rights and as indeed the final proof that Government had embarked on a policy which aimed at suppressing political activities. The Home Secretary, therefore, concluded his remarks by observing thus :

In the fight for position, the tactical advantage has already to a very undesirable extent passed to Gandhi and his arrest and prosecution at the present juncture would seriously increase that advantage. The policy of Government at the present moment—the only possible policy indeed—whilst steadily enforcing law and order, and suppressing intimidation and violence, is to keep down arrests and prosecutions to the minimum. If steadily pursued, this policy should prove successful in the struggle with the volunteers. The real danger which confronts us is that we shall be unable to carry with us in this task moderate opinion. If we fail to do so, the present constitution will break down. But the arrest of Gandhi at the present moment so far from lessening our difficulties would add to them enormously.<sup>58</sup>

But the Governor of Bombay again in his telegram dated 4 January 1922 insisted on the arrest of Gandhiji. He charged that Gandhiji was just using time under the pretext of holding a Round Table Conference between the Government and him supported by Moderates. He added that so long as the Conference continued, the Government could not touch him without putting themselves in the wrong. If the Conference failed, he could safely lay the blame on Government, and if it succeeded, Gandhiji would have won without “firing a shot”. In the mean time, while the attention of the Government would be diverted on the Conference, he could make all his preparations of Mass Civil Disobedience for “completely throwing off disguise until ultimately we shall find the ground cut from under us, the police and the army seduced as the past recalling, the support of masses of people irretrievably lost, and

<sup>58</sup>. *Ibid*, pp. 1-2.

any action we may then take will be too late and merely serve to set a match to the bonfire he has prepared." He also said that the fact therefore that such a Conference was to be held and that Gandhiji had agreed to attend it was yet another factor which made him feel that he had no alternative but to arrest Gandhiji promptly and proceed against him for "sedition". The reasons which led him to that conclusion were urged as follows :

The grave fear I have that it will be impossible much longer to keep force of law and order, the army and the police immune from this political infection unless active steps are taken to arrest organisers of sedition. There is a good deal of unrest in the police all over India which is believed to be economic rather than political, but in my opinion it is inevitable that the present political situation must be reacting seriously upon both police and military. The grave responsibility I feel in allowing Congress resolutions and speeches such as those made at Ahmedabad to go unchecked any longer. It is clear that Hasrat Mohani's speech reflected on the general feeling of Congress.<sup>59</sup>

In fact, the very decision to launch a Mass Civil Disobedience created unprecedented political consciousness among the masses. This aspect had particularly frightened the Governor of Bombay. In his telegram sent to the Viceroy on 7 January 1922 he again highlighted the point :

The essential point is that if the present policy of Gandhi is allowed to continue unchecked, it will create a situation ending inevitably in violence which Gandhi could not control even should he wish to do so, and which the other probable results pointed out by me, in particular the defection of the moderate party and corruption of the police and army, would render extremely difficult to retrieve. The only other alternative that I can

59. *Ibid*, pp. 2-3.

see would be the capitulation of Government to the demand of Gandhi.<sup>60</sup>

But Gandhiji was still vacillating about launching the Civil Disobedience campaign. No better evidence in this connection can be produced than the teletam dated 10 January 1922 from the Viceroy to the Governor of Bombay. It runs as follows:

Your proposal that Gandhi should be prosecuted at once has been carefully considered by us. We fully appreciate the dangers inherent in the activities of Gandhi, and in the continuance of the movement and propaganda of which he is the protagonist. Further, we recognise that should Gandhi take active steps in the direction of mass civil disobedience, such as those indicated in paragraph 4 of our letter dated the 24th November 1921, we should have no alternative but to arrest and prosecute him. But as we read the situation, this is not the line which Gandhi at present proposes to follow. Moderate opinion, as you know, is much exercised over the action taken under the Seditious Meetings Act and the Criminal Law Amendment Act, which large number of moderates regard as an infringement of the rights of free speech and political association. Gandhi has seen his opportunity in this development and intends, so far as we can judge, to concentrate on the volunteer issue, which he has declared to be not a fight for Swaraj, but for the rights of free speech and political association. We have in these circumstances come to the conclusion that the immediate prosecution of Gandhi, on charges which presumably would be based on recent resolutions and declarations to which he has been a party, or of which he has been the author, would be a tactical error. It would alienate still further the moderates, tend to bring about that very

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60. *Ibid*, p. 4.

fusion of moderates and extremists which you are anxious to avoid, and accordingly add greatly to the difficulties already great of the existing situation.<sup>61</sup>

Meanwhile the extensive preparations to launch Civil Disobedience on mass scale were being made. According to a news of Bombay Intelligence, in its secret meeting held in the second week of January 1922 the Gujarat Provincial Congress Committee was urging Mahatma Gandhi that he should give notice to the Government fixing the date of the commencement of Mass Civil Disobedience including non-payment of taxes in Anant and Bardoli. And in his reply communicated by Gandhiji he exhorted the people of Gujarat to rival the performance of the people of Bengal, Punjab and the United Provinces and fill jails to their utmost capacity.<sup>62</sup> Perhaps he had come to realise by this time his Moderate friends had proved of no use to persuade the Government to accept the demands of the national liberation movement. Pressed by mass awakening he was adopting an attitude of open defiance to the colonial authorities. In the middle of January 1922, in his journal *Young India* he wrote an article entitled "A puzzle and its solution" with special reference to the following words:

We seek arrest because the so-called freedom is slavery. We are challenging the might of this Government because we consider its activity to be wholly evil. We want to overthrow the Government, we want to compel its submission to the people's will. Non-Co-operators are at war with Government, they have declared rebellion against it.<sup>63</sup>

61. *Ibid*, p. 4.

62. See the Telegram of the Governor of Bombay to the Viceroy, dated 11 January 1922, [*Ibid*, p. 5].

63. See the Telegram of the Government of Bombay to the Viceroy, dated 16 January 1922, [*Ibid*, p. 6].



The Government of Bombay believed that the article was merely one of a series of articles whose object was to create disaffection against the imperialist system and finally to overthrow it.<sup>64</sup> In his telegram dated 16 January 1922 he listed other articles written by Gandhiji previously. Most dangerous among whom were considered "disaffection a virtue", "Fishing for Apologies", "Punjab Prosecutions", "Outraged Feelings" etc.<sup>65</sup>

On reading the above information the Home Secretary to the Government of India, S. P. O' Donnell, remarked in his confidential file on 19 January 1922 that it was, of course, clear that the articles selected proved that Gandhiji had sought, and was seeking, to promote disaffection and to subvert the Government, but that such was the character of Non-Co-operation Movement and of Gandhiji's propaganda that had always been manifest. Admitting the gravity of the political situation created by the mass awakening he added:

It can no doubt be urged...that the Non-Co-operation Movement, has shown great vitality, that its hold upon the country has grown and is growing, and that it is no longer safe to refrain from taking action against the leaders. No one can deny that there are risks in refraining from action. But the balance of argument is still in my opinion decisively against a prosecution at this juncture. In the struggle with Gandhi the fight has always been a fight for position. In November and December last the tactical advantage passed for the time to Gandhi. During the present month moderate opinion has shown distinct signs of veering round in favour of Government. Their leaders

(previous footnote contd.)

It may be recalled that speaking in the same context on the eve of his arrest in December 1921 Pandit Motilal Nehru had also emphatically declared: "I am being taken to the house of freedom."

[*Ibid*, p. 8].

64. For further study see *Ibid*.

65. *Ibid*.

have been alienated by the arrogant attitude taken by Gandhi and his associates, and the tendency to condemn the action recently taken by Government has distinctly weakened. If a prosecution is now launched against Gandhi at a moment when he has not initiated mass civil obedience, when his immediate effort are concentrated on the volunteer issue, when he can claim that at the moment the issue is one of freedom of speech and political association and upon charges based on his statements made in the last year, which are largely affirmations of the non-co-operation creed, the advantage gained by the Government for the moment would be lost. The pendulum would swing round, probably violently in favour of Gandhi, and the non-cooperation movement would acquire an additional impetus and additional support.<sup>66</sup>

But in the same note he made sure to point out the vacillating attitude of Gandhiji in regard to Mass Civil Disobedience. It seemed clear to him Gandhiji did not propose to take his step. Though there had been talks of Civil Disobedience in parts of Gujarat, but a decision had again been deferred and everything indicated that Gandhiji would for the present at any rate concentrate on the volunteer issue. Sooner or later, the Secretary, however, believed, he would be forced into proclaiming Mass Civil Disobedience. The volunteer demonstrations, if steadily countered, would not continue indefinitely and Gandhiji would then be compelled to launch his final offensive. If he did so the course of the Government would be clear. A challenge would have been made which it could take up with confidence. In his opinion, Gandhiji himself undoubtedly had realized this fact. He had probably never been anxious to start Mass Civil Disobedience, at any rate since the Bombay riots. He had rejoiced at the opportunity which the proclamation of the volunteer associations gave him of selecting another and more popular issue on the conflict with Government. If the Government was then withholding its hand, it was to Mass Civil

66. *Ibid*, pp. 6-7,

Disobedience to which he would be in a position to enter on the final struggle with him and his movement without the risk of alienating such support as they could get in the country. In the opinion of the Home Secretary it was not proper to precipitate a crisis which would break the constitution.<sup>67</sup>

The Viceroy, Lord Reading, was also waiting for a direct challenge from Gandhiji.<sup>68</sup> Expressing his views on the same problem the Home Member, W.H. Vincent, remarked on 23 January 1922:

Though the prosecution of Gandhi has been deferred, all preparatory arrangements should be made and material kept in readiness. The reply to the Government of Bombay should indicate that it is clear that Gandhi will have to be prosecuted but that the Government of India would prefer to choose their own time for such action and to base the prosecution on grounds which will receive the maximum support from the public as in such circumstances a prosecution will be less likely to lead to outbreaks of violence. This advantage may probably be secured when he personally inaugurates civil disobedience. The Government of India are anxious not to give colour to the idea that he was prosecuted because he has made a conference impossible : and it is because he has postponed his campaign of civil disobedience till the 31st January that they think that prosecution should be postponed till then. This order is not, however, to preclude a prosecution earlier if such a course is necessitated by any action of his before that date.<sup>69</sup>

In his note the Home Member also instructed that all local governments be asked to provide to the Government of India telegraphic information of the systematic inauguration in any area of Mass Civil Disobedience.<sup>70</sup>

67. *Ibid.*, p. 7.

68. *Ibid.*

69. *Ibid.*

70. *Ibid.*

And the provincial governments too were quite prompt to draw the attention of the Central Government towards the gravity of situation created by the declaration of Mass Civil Disobedience. The Chief Secretary to the Government of Madras telegraphed to the Home Department on 25 January 1922, "Civil Disobedience...have been systematically started in a part of Guntur District. To the best of our information it...is the work of local non-co-operators acting independently."<sup>71</sup>

In a telegram dated 26 January 1922 the Chief Secretary to the Government of Bengal informed that the situation was rapidly drifting towards Mass Civil Disobedience in various parts of the province. Organized meetings had been held in Calcutta. A meeting held in Dacca had to be dispersed by force. In a part of Midnapore district under the direction of local Congress Committee the Unions had announced for refusal to pay *chaukidari* tax. Similar though less definite refusal in Rajshahi, Rangpur and Mymen Singh was clearly visible. The sub-divisional officer at Noakhali was held by a mob of 200. Everything was declared to be ready in Faridpur for Civil Disobedience.<sup>72</sup>

Likewise the Chief Secretary to the Government of Central Provinces telegraphically complained to the Home Department on 26 January 1922 that some villages of jungle trace in one district quite recently started removing without licence dry wood from a neighbouring Government forest and refused to desist when ordered by the local forest officials.<sup>73</sup>

At Delhi too a meeting of the All-India Congress Committee was held under the presidentship of Lala Lajpat Rai towards the close of January 1922, where the programme of Civil Disobedience was adopted. In a speech delivered at Ferozepur and reported in *The Tribune*, Lahore, on 3 February

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71. *Ibid*, Appendix 11, p. 5.

72. *Ibid*, Appendix 12, p. 5.

73. *Ibid*. Appendix 13. p. 5.

1922 Lala Lajpat Rai had spoken in the same strain. The District Magistrate of Lahore suspected that at the Punjab Provincial Congress Committee to be held in the near future, similar matters would be discussed. So he banned the holding of meetings under the Prevention of Seditious Meetings Act. But Lala Lajpat Rai defied and held the meeting, as a result of which he along with others, was arrested and sent for trial. The militant section of the Press condemned the behaviour of the Punjab Government and favoured Civil Disobedience.<sup>74</sup>

In his telegram sent to Gandhiji at Delhi, Rafi Ahmed Kidwai, Secretary, U.P. Congress Committee, informed about the observance of *hartal* in Lucknow and other parts of the province. This symbolized the inauguration of Civil Disobedience Movement in the United Provinces.<sup>75</sup>

A considerable number of Muslim Non-Co-operators had declared in favour of Mass Civil Disobedience much earlier. On 21 and 22 September 1921 there was held at Delhi the meetings of Central Khilafat Committee and Jamait-ul Ulema. According to a secret report of the Central Intelligence Bureau, all the prominent militant leaders like Dr. Syed Mahmud were "breathing civil disobedience" and the Subjects Committee meeting opened with the same question. It was urged that their respected leaders were being arrested for preaching disaffection against the Government and "it was the last straw to break camel's back and there was nothing left for them but to have recourse to civil disobedience."<sup>76</sup> When leaders like Maulana Abul Kalam Azad and Hakim Ajmal Khan tried to postpone the issue by saying that the question of Civil Disobedience was purely a political question and it should not be decided by one section of the Indian public as without the co-operation of the Congress it was bound to fail, Maulvi Habeeb-ur-Rehman of Ludhiana immediately retorted by saying that it appeared

74. Home (Pol.) Dept., Govt. of India, File No. 155/1922, pp. 66 and 68.

75. Home (Pol.) Dept., File No. 489/1922, p. 36.

76. Home (Pol.) Dept., Govt. of India, File No. 137/1921, p. 47.

that they had sold Islam to Gandhiji.<sup>77</sup> On the motion of Hasrat Mohani it was decided to ask the provincial Khilafat Committees to report as to when they could have trained men for carrying on Civil Disobedience and what would be their quota.<sup>78</sup>

The meeting of Jamait-ul Ulema conducted its deliberations on 21 September 1921. One Shanker Lal of Delhi, who was also present as a visitor, said that because the Congress had not accepted the resolution of Civil Disobedience at that time "you say that you cannot pass it here although a death-blow has been dealt to your freedom."<sup>79</sup> This exhortation caused a great stir among the audience and everyone said that they should disobey all orders of the Government and should have nothing to do with it.<sup>80</sup> In his speech Maulvi Abdul Wadood of Bareilly said that nothing short of complete Civil Disobedience would meet the situation. Maulvi Sana Ullah of Amritsar said that it was their duty to observe Civil Disobedience.<sup>81</sup> Another speaker from Deoband also agreed that disobedience of all Government laws and orders was most necessary. Still another speaker from Bihar, Mohammed Sajjad said that Civil Disobedience was obligatory and most essential. Maulvi Moiuddin of Ajmer said that it was not the time to remain silent and to have regard for "Aman and Sakun" (peace and order).<sup>82</sup>

No sooner was the last speech over than there was a general demand for addition of a clause to the original resolution calling for Civil Disobedience.<sup>83</sup> Thereupon Maulana Abul Kalam Azad got up and in the tone of a traditional Gandhian pacifier he said that they should not be "carried away by the heat of the moment." He also added that the

77. *Ibid*, 47.

78. *Ibid*, 48.

79. *Ibid*, 49.

80. *Ibid*.

81. *Ibid*.

82. *Ibid*.

83. *Ibid*.

*issue related to Civil Disobedience was a point which concerned all India and it could not be put into force by one single community. It, therefore, could not be decided without consulting the other community. He evaded the issue by saying that the time for the next sitting of the Congress was not far off and this matter might be represented there and after which the Jamaat-ul Ulema could give its final opinions.*<sup>84</sup> Reporting these developments in his confidential letter dated 1 October 1921 the Delhi Chief Commissioner, C.A. Barron, to the Home Secretary S.P.O'Donnell, remarked thus contemptuously:

Headed by the notorious Abul Kalam Azad they took a very strong line and for the immediate and aggressive civil disobedience. The political faction, composed chiefly of lawyers, and certain divines jealous of Abul Kalam's ascendancy offered great resistance to his intemperate advice.<sup>85</sup>

Subsequent developments at the Ahmedabad session and even afterwards provide evidence to justify that the militant wing among the Muslims remained consistently in favour of Mass Civil Disobedience up to the last moment of its declaration.

Although Gandhiji's pronouncements on Civil Disobedience had been studiously vague as to the matters of technique and practical details, yet the masses were unequivocally determined to plunge into the struggle. As late as 6 February 1922 the Secretary of State for India expressed his anxiety, in a telegram to the Viceroy, over the "deterioration" of political situation in India. He said: "Every successive telegram (from you) adds to the impression that the situation is very serious." He also added that the continued freedom of Gandhiji to organise and issue justifications of Civil Disobedience "must lead to disaster." He thought that situation had already passed beyond stage where it could be adequately dealt with by press communique. Suggesting the measures to be taken, he said that the

<sup>84</sup>. *Ibid.*

<sup>85</sup>, *Ibid*, pp. 42,

organization of partial or total *Civil Disobedience* must be prevented, and that all those who were held to be the principal instigators and leaders of the movement must be dealt with promptly. He also said that there was no doubt that the Viceroy was confronted by a movement designed and supported with a view to "overthrowing your Government."<sup>86</sup> Protesting against the tone of the telegram, nevertheless admitting the gravity of situation the Viceroy replied on 8 February 1922:

We must...offer our respectful protest against the implication that so far we have failed to realize the gravity of the present situation.<sup>87</sup>

Events were moving with a very fast speed. On 24 January 1922 the Government of Bombay had been told telegraphically that no fresh reference need be made to Government of India before a prosecution was instituted against Gandhiji, if he directly embarked on a active campaign of Civil Disobedience. Should Gandhiji therefore, take that step, he would be arrested without further reference to the Government of India, and they should probably not hear of the arrest till it had been, was on the point of being affected.<sup>88</sup>

It is undoubtedly true and unchallengable fact that the intelligence service of the Government of India operated remarkably and efficiently. Perhaps on the basis of his contact with the Moderates like Malaviya and Jayakar who were always more than anxious and keen to mediate and who were equally trusted and kept in confidence both by the Government and Gandhiji, the Home Secretary to the Government, S. P. O'Donnell, could still confidently remark on 28 January 1922 just four days before Gandhiji's ultimatum:

It is still far from certain that Gandhi will start civil disobedience but we should not neglect any precaution.<sup>89</sup>

86. Home (Political) Department, Govt. of India, File No. 489/1922, Appendix 18, pp. 7-8.

87. *Ibid*, Appendix 24, p. 10,

88. *Ibid*, pp. 8-9

89. Home (Pol.) Dept., Govt. of India, File No. 489/1922, pp. 8-9.



On 1 February 1922 Gandhiji despatched an ultimatum to the Viceroy stating that if political prisoners were not freed, and repressive laws applicable to the nationalist Press not annulled he would inaugurate the last stage of the Non-Cooperation Movement, namely, refusal to pay taxes.<sup>90</sup>

The political situation was so tense at that time that the labour leaders and even some Liberals demanded the immediate end of the repressions. The *Daily Herald* wrote on 2 January 1922, "Repression must be ceased immediately in order to avoid civil war."

The Madras Correspondent of the *Daily Mail* reported that the situation was of so threatening a nature that all Europeans had armed themselves and were performing police duties.<sup>91</sup>

On 4 February 1922 the Government of India issued a communique in reply to the ultimatum of Gandhiji. Referring to the unprecedented political consciousness created by the movement in 1921 the notification admitted though in a contemptuous language: "...The Government were confronted with a new and

dangerous situation. In the course of the past year there had been systematic attempts to temper with the loyalty of the soldiers and the police and there had occurred numerous outbreaks of serious disorder directly attributable to the propaganda of the non-cooperation party amongst the ignorant and excitable masses. These outbreaks had resulted in grave loss of life; the growth of a dangerous spirit of lawlessness; and an increasing disregard for lawful authority.<sup>9</sup> In November they culminated in the grave riots in Bombay, in which 53 persons lost their lives and approximately 400 were wounded. On the same date

90. *Statement Exhibiting the Conditions of India During the Year 1921-22*, p 327.

91. *Pravda* (Moscow), 14 January 1922.

dangerous manifestations of lawlessness occurred in many of the volunteer associations which had embarked on a systematic campaign of violence, intimidation and obstruction, to combat which proceedings under the Penal Code and the code of Criminal Procedure had proved ineffective.”<sup>92</sup> Decrying the movement further the Home Secretary said :

Mass civil disobedience is fraught with such danger to the State that it must be met with sternness and severity. The Government entertain no doubt that in any measures which they may have to take for its suppression they can count on the support and assistance of all law-abiding and loyal citizens of His Majesty.<sup>93</sup>

Apprehending that the rapid growth of the anti-imperialist movement would prove fatal to the sustenance of British rule, the Government of India used their traditional weapon of *Divide et Impera*. They despatched a telegram to London demanding a revision of the Turkish Treaty. They hoped this would pacify the Indian Muslims and would as well split Hindu-Muslim unity.<sup>94</sup>

Those were the days when India, Ireland and Egypt were involved in the freedom movement. The British Empire was experiencing a crisis which reflected the general crisis of capitalism. Lloyd George, the British Premier, declared that the Great Britain could not and would not grant India self-Government. By promising to grant independence to Ireland and Egypt, the London Government were able to transfer part of the British troops to India.

This Imperialist measure was retaliated too quickly by the Bareilly and Gorakhpur districts—two strongholds of mass movement in then the United Provinces.

92. Home (Pol.) Dept., Govt. of India, File No. 489/1922, p. 11.

93. *Ibid*, pp. 11-2.

94. But the British Government received the proposal to revise the Turkish Peace Treaty rather unsympathetically. [*Ibid*].

On 2 February 1922 in Bareilly 5000 Congress Volunteers regardless of the fact that the volunteer organization had been outlawed towards the close of 1921, organised demonstrations and meetings. The police raided the local Congress Committee office and torn into pieces the flags held by the volunteers. On the arrival of fresh reinforcements the volunteers attempted to capture the local Town Hall and unfurl the national flag. There occurred a clash leading to bloodshed between them and the police, during which the volunteers used the missiles of sticks, broken bricks etc. In the conflagration the Chief Magistrate and Superintendent of Police were wounded. There were several killed and severely wounded among the volunteers.<sup>95</sup>

Two days later the Congress volunteers at Chauri Chaura revenged the injustice done to their compatriots in Bareilly by burning alive some policemen who had provoked them by firing.<sup>96</sup>

#### **Fatal Blow of the Bourgeoisie**

The anti-imperialist movement was thus remarkably maturing and rapidly growing into a revolution. Although the Government of India's Home Department was still considering the proposal of Bombay Government to introduce legislation specifically penalizing incitements by leaders and newspapers to tax-payers or tenants to withhold taxes or rents, and strengthening armed police, even at the risk that money might not be granted by the Legislative Assembly and that budget would have to be restored, yet in the capital of the British Empire there were current the reports of a widely held belief that British "Mission in India" was regarded by the colonial authorities as drawing to a close and that preparations were being made by them for retreat from India.<sup>97</sup> At this important though critical, historical juncture the Indian *bourgeoisie* stabbed in the back of national liberation struggle. On 11 and 12 February an extraordinary session of the National Congress was called in Bardoli due to pressure

95. *Ibid.*, p. 37.

96. *Ibid.*

97. See the Telegram dated 14 February 1922 sent by the Secretary of State for India to the Viceroy. [*Ibid.*, p.36].

of bourgeois leaders like Pt. Malaviya and Jayakar. It adopted a resolution expressing indignation at the violence used at Chauri chaura and called for the suspension of the Civil Disobedience campaign throughout India. Entitling as "Another Edict from Bardoli : Civil Disobedience Suspended 'until Atmosphere Nonviolent'" the daily newspaper *Pioneer* published on 15 February 1922 the text of the fatal resolution. The important and relevant extract from the same is quoted below :

The Working Committee deplores the inhuman conduct of the mob at Chauri Chaura in having brutally murdered and wantonly burned the police thana and tenders its sympathy to the families of the bereaved.

In view of the repeated warnings every time that mass civil disobedience has been imminent, some popular violent outburst has taken place indicating that the atmosphere in the country is not non-violent enough for mass civil disobedience, the latest instance being the tragic and terrible events at Chauri Chaura, near Gorakhpur, the Working Committee of the Congress resolves that mass civil disobedience contemplated at Bardoli and elsewhere be suspended, and instructs the local Congress Committees forthwith to advise the cultivators to pay the land revenue and other taxes due to the Government whose payment might have been suspended in anticipation of mass civil disobedience, and instructs them to suspend every other preparatory activity of an offensive nature.

The suspension of mass civil disobedience shall be continued till the atmosphere is so non-violent as to ensure the non-repetition of atrocities such as at Gorakhpur or hooliganism such as at Bombay and Madras, respectively, on the 17th November 1921, and 13th January last.

**Arrests should not be courted**

In order to promote a peaceful atmosphere the Working Committee advised, till further instructions, all Congress organisations to stop activities especially designed to court arrest and imprisonment save the normal Congress activities, including voluntary *hartals*, whereby an absolutely peaceful atmosphere could be assured, and to that end all picketing should be stopped save for the bonafide and peaceful purpose of the visitors to liquor shops against the evils of drinking. Such picketing was to be controlled by persons of known good character, and specially selected by the Congress Committee concerned. The resolution also said :

The Working Committee advises, till further instructions, the stoppage of all "volunteer" processions and public meetings merely for the purposes of defiance of the notifications regarding such meetings. This, however, shall not interfere with the private meetings of the Congress and other committees or public meetings which are required for the conduct of the normal activities of the Congress....

Demanding laxity in choosing volunteers the Committee said :

Complaints having been brought to the notice of the Working Committee that in the formation of "volunteer" corps great laxity prevailed in the selection, that insistence was not had on the full use of hand-spun and hand-woven and on the full observance by Hindus of the principle to the removal of untouchability nor was care being taken to ascertain that the candidates believed fully in the observance of non-violence intent, word, and deed in terms of the Congress resolution, the Working Committee calls upon all Congress organizations to revise their lists and remove from them the names of all such volunteers as did not strictly conform to the requirements of the pledge.

The Committee also said : .

The Working Committee is of the opinion that, unless Congressmen carry out to the full the Congress Constitution

and the resolutions from time to time issued by the Working Committee, it was not possible to achieve its objects expeditiously or at all.<sup>98</sup>

The foregoing resolutions will have effect only pending the meeting to be specially convened of the All-India Congress Committee, and thereafter, subject to confirmation by it, the Secretary was to call such meeting as early as possible after consultation with Hakim Ajmal Khan.

The Bardoli Resolution also stated :

The Gorakhpur tragedy is a powerful proof of the fact that the mass mind has not yet fully realized the necessity of non-violence as an integral active and chief part of mass civil disobedience, and indiscriminate acceptance of persons as "volunteers" in contravention of the Congress instructions, betrays want of appreciation of the vital part of satyagraha, in the opinion of the Working Committee, the delay in the attainment of the national aim is solely due to the weak and incomplete execution in practice of the constitution of the Congress.<sup>99</sup>

The Chief Secretary to the Government of Bombay even after the suspension doubted that that situation would be calm. He believed that this postponement would almost certainly be subject to the maintenance of the propaganda which would continue and further develop the most dangerous features of the existing situation. He indicated that the primary object of the postponement would merely be preparation for more favourable conditions for a resumption of the campaign.<sup>100</sup>

There is incorporated a document in one of the confidential files of the Home Department of the Government of India of that period. It carries great historical significance not only because it speaks of an attempt by the Indian *bourgeoisie* which

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<sup>98</sup> *Ibid*, p. 34.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid*, p. 35.

<sup>100</sup> *Ibid*, Appendix 26, p. 12.

was not in consonance with the principle of national self-determination, but also because it lends credence to the popular impression that the leaders of Indian *bourgeoisie* were manoeuvred into sabotaging the liberation struggle. The document is a resolution passed on 14 February 1922 by an urgent meeting of the Committee of Bombay Representatives Conference just two days after the suspension of Mass Civil Disobedience, by the Congress Working Committee. The fateful lines in the resolution are :

... in view of new situation created by Congress Working Committee's decision at Bardoli, Government of India should give immediate effect to recommendations contained in third resolution of Bombay Conference for withdrawal of orders, and notifications and release of prisoners. Committee opines that Bardoli resolutions, when confirmed by All-India Congress, will ensure even more favourable atmosphere than that contemplated in Viceroy's speech for convening a Round Table Conference.<sup>101</sup>

The language of the document leaves enough for students of history to conjecture and speculate that some official at the level of a Secretary in the Home Department must have asked Malaviya to impress upon Gandhiji that if he withdrew his ultimatum of launching the mass movement, there would be a fair chance for his other demands being accepted by the colonial authorities. Shortly afterwards Pt. Malaviya did meet Gandhiji. Although in his interview released to the Associated Press of India on 26 February 1922 just after the proceedings of the All-India Congress Committee at Delhi, Gandhiji refuted the allegation that he was labouring under the influence of Pt. Malaviya and simultaneously admitting that nothing would please him better than to be able to confess that he had yielded upon any point to Malaviya's persuasions<sup>102</sup>, nevertheless, the possibility of Malaviya acting as a strike-breaker on the instructions of colonial authorities is not to be ruled out.

101. Home (Pol.) Dept., Government of India, File No. 489/1922, p. 36.

102. *Ibid*, p. 31.

The British rulers, who were past masters in the art of running an empire through negotiations, not only made the best use of the times to ridicule Gandhiji and the national movement but also lost no time in refuting, only two days after the Bardoli meeting of the Congress Working Committee, which they never dared to do till the ultimatum of Gandhiji stood, the widely held belief that their "mission in India" was regarded by them to be "drawing to a close" and that "preparations are being made by us for retreat." In his telegram dated 14 February 1922 sent to the Viceroy the Secretary of State for India held that such an idea was a complete fallacy and its continuous existence could lead to intensified challenges to their rule and to demoralization among civil and military services. With an unequivocality lacking previously but intensively displayed only after Bardoli decisions, the Secretary of State appeared to talk from a position of strength that they were not ready to anticipate in the foreseeable future to move an inch ahead from their earlier Declaration of 1917 which had been disapproved by Indian people long before. Using the tones of Rudyard Kipling, as if he was distributing some charity to helpless Indians, the Secretary of State held that the next instalment of self-government would be dependent on evidence which would have to satisfy Imperial Parliament that the first instalment of 1919 had been implemented "peacefully, loyally and successfully." In his statement he did not conceal for a moment the fact that much of the power *residue* had still been left at the initiative and disposal of British bureaucrats. "To those responsibilities we cannot permit any challenge", he added boastfully. He also said that no steps with regard to a compromise threatening the British Empire intact could be conceived by them. If, therefore, it was found impossible by them to make a reduction in the size of the army or to accept a programme of Indianization, which they were constrained to believe, would prejudice its efficiency, it was because they believed that such proposals if accepted, would not only in itself lend colour to the "dangerous" belief in a policy of retreat but "must directly hamper" them in the exercise of the functions with which they were entrusted. In his statement he advised



the Viceroy to leave no stone unturned to resist and defeat any attempt to undermine their authority or any action designed to challenge their determination to maintain British Empire in tact.<sup>103</sup>

British imperialism continued to shake its gory claws in the faces of Indians. Lord Birkenhead reminded them that Britain had lost none of her hard fibre. Montagu told them in the plainest language that the British were the most determined nation in the world, who would brook no interference with their purpose. It is quite appropriate to quote the exact words by Reuter :

If the existence of our Empire were challenged, the discharge of responsibilities of the British Government of India prevented and demands were made in the very mistaken belief that we contemplated retreat from India, then India would not challenge with success the most determined people in the world, who would once again answer the challenge with all the vigour and determination at their command.<sup>104</sup>

Without learning a lesson from the history of British imperialism—that theirs was a continuous record of broken promises and that in an imperial system there is always a slender hope of fulfilment for the dispossessed—Gandhiji fell into the trap laid down by the colonial authorities through Malaviya and others. Gandhiji was to repeat the same blunder at a later phase of the national movement at the time of negotiations with Lord Irwin during the days of the salt *satyagraha*.

#### **Aftermath of Suspension**

No sooner the Civil Disobedience Movement in Bardoli was suspended there was uproar all over the country. Not only the Congress leaders<sup>105</sup> but also the young radicals, who were

103. *Ibid*, p. 39.

104. *Ibid*, p. 40.

105. For reaction in Congress circles see author's *Indian People Fight For National Liberation* (New Delhi, Srijaanee Prakashan, 1972), pp. 196-98.

once enthused by Gandhiji to participate in the national liberation movement launched by him in 1920, were disillusioned. The latter turned either into young revolutionaries or communists later on. Before their actual comments are cited here, it would be fair to give the total purport of their reaction. They stigmatized the Congress as a misguided *bourgeois* and compromising organization. Its leader Mahatma Gandhiji was considered a grotesque reactionary who was too much preoccupied with religious scruples. After having fomented the revolution to the point of climax, he had turned back in the hay day of victory because of the so-called horrors at Chauri Chaura. Other Congress leaders who, on learning the news of suspension, were first furious but then had succumbed to the patting persuasions of Gandhiji, were dubbed as trepid *bourgeois* reformists and ludicrous carrierists. The young radicals also accused Gandhiji of having thrown the movement into disarray on the call of his Inner Voice and God. They charged him with having decomposed the national movement by mystifying politics and paralyzing the revolutionary initiative of the masses. They also held that through Bardoli debacle India missed a chance to lead the movement towards the higher goal of a socialist revolution of the kind which had brought Russia out of the twilight of medieval Czardom. The passionate desire of the Mahatma to observe *ahimsa* in all circumstances had made the world poorer by one great man, potentially possessed of creative talent.

For instance, there is Manmath Nath Gupta who had first joined the Non-Co-operation Movement and was jailed. Raged at its premature suspension he joined the young revolutionaries, participated in the Kakori "conspiracy" and got imprisoned for a long term. In his book *They Lived Dangerously* he reviews that phase of our struggle and remarks: "Gandhi had brought politics down to the masses, but he recoiled at the first glow of revolution."<sup>106</sup> "People are waiting for that day

106. Manmath Nath Gupta, "Gandhi and the Revolutionaries during 1925", M.B. Rao, n. 53, p. 92.

when the ghost of non-violence will disappear from the head of the Congress", said Bhagat Singh and Yashpal in their *Philosophy of Bomb*.<sup>107</sup>

Likewise, in the early twenties Shaukat Usmani became a Khilafatist, went on *hijrat* as *muhajirin* to Kabul and from there to Tashkent where he was trained at the military school in Communism by M.N. Roy. After completing his apprenticeship he returned to India at a time when the Non-Co-operation Movement had been suspended. In his expression he was quite flamboyant and like a braggart indulged in talking big. In a severely critical tone he wrote to M. N. Roy at Berlin, "Ahimsawala propaganda of the Gandhi School has not only destroyed the *bourgeois* movement, but has also impaired the spirit of working classes.... Armed intervention is the last doctor which can save the Indian proletariat from the grave."<sup>108</sup>

In 1923 M. N. Roy and his wife Ellen Roy published a book *One year of Non-Co-operation* in which Gandhiji was praised for his moral qualities but, nevertheless, he was dubbed as a reactionary. Ellen Roy, expressing her views under pseudonym of Shanti Devi, predicted that Gandhiji would be remembered by posterity in the same way as his saintly prototypes of the antiquity, such as Thomas Aquinas Savonarola and St Francis of Assisi, but she was severely critical about the creed of non-violence. She thought it futile to expect that thirty crores of Indians would "cheerfully endure all kicks and insults, all hunger and nakedness, all poverty and wretchedness at the hands of their exploiters" in the fond hope that the exploiters and blood-suckers would respond "by throwing away their machine guns and flesh-pots, their treasure

107. *Mukti*, a collection of documents (Delhi, 1972), p. 32, see pp. 54-6.

108. *A Bolshevik Conspiracy Trial of 8 Indians*, a collection of Court Proceedings at the Cawnpore Trial published regularly in those days by the Bombay office of the *Times of India*. The File is preserved in the National Archives of India, New Delhi.

hoards and princely power.” She added : “Non-violence, resignation, perfect love and release from the pain of living—this is the substance of Indian philosophers who found good to keep the people in subjection....Gandhi is nothing but the hair of this long line of ghostly ancestors.” [pp. 45 and 48-50.] The Roy’s new recruit for Communism in India, Muzaffar Ahmad, reacted years later by saying :

In a country where a Jalianwalla Bagh could happen, there could be a Chauri Chaura also. But the incident was more than this tender-hearted dictator (Gandhiji) could bear.<sup>109</sup>

On his own part M. N. Roy regarded the Bardoli decision as a gross betrayal of the revolutionary movement. He alleged that a national upsurge, which the British Imperialists had feared, was checked and thrown into rout by the good offices of the Mahatma himself. Deriding the “incorrigible pacifism” of the Mahatma, Roy stated : “What government repression in all its varied forms had failed to accomplish, the agonized appeal of the Mahatma was able to effectuate....That which arrests, tortures, floggings, imprisonments, massacres, fines and police *zoolums* could not quell—the blind struggles of a starving nation to save itself from utter annihilation—Mr. Gandhi by the simple magic of love and non-violence, reduced to impotence and inactivity....The Congress had committed suicide by repudiating the revolutionary action of its own followers. A powerful revolutionary movement had been sacrificed on the altar of Gandhism.” (op. cit, pp. 40-41.)

At about this time there also appeared an article in *Vanguard* by a special correspondent. Commenting on the situation after the suspension of the movement and the Gaya session he observed that the Congress was dead and the “Shradh” (obsequies) ceremony had been “celebrated” at

109. *Myself and the Communist Party of India* (Calcutta, National Book Agency, 1970), p. 122.

Gaya. Proceeding he wrote, "It can be asserted, that the Congress is purely an instrument of the middle class. The working class has been kept as far away from it as a "Sudra" from a "Pavitra"...Violence and mass action—they lack courage to face its (sic) appearance. They drive away the foreigner. You know very well that whereas mahatmas and moulanas have monopolised the Congress leadership, the Christian reverends and bishops have strangled the labour movement. It is pity that people like C. F. Andrews preside over the Labour Congress."<sup>110</sup> On 1 February 1923 Shaukat Usmani again wrote a letter to Roy, in which he remarked, "...as soon as he (Gandhiji) reappears [after his release from Yervada jail] on the political platform, there is every possibility of his being posted down. Tolstoy fell in ditch and so has been the fate of his orthodox follower, Gandhi."<sup>111</sup> Writing again on the same issue to Roy a fortnight later on 15 February 1923 the outspoken Usmani remarked, "The plague germs (lacekys of God capital) must be butchered in cold blood. No compromise, no mercy."<sup>112</sup> Reviewing the position of the Congress on the occasion of 1923 session at Cocanada Singaravelu Chettiar wrote to Roy, "I have not much hope in the coming Congress session. The whole thing may be bunkum and the humdrum resolutions may be repeated once again. After Bardoli the Congress is almost dead...and it may be a decade or two before the lost momentum is attained."<sup>113</sup> At this juncture Dange also explained his standpoint, according to which the nationalist movement after Bardoli decision meant the struggle of the Indian capital to get hold of monopoly of resources to exploit India with the help of British *bourgeoisie*.<sup>114</sup>

110. Quoted by *Times of India* (Bombay), 25 April 1924, pp. 9-10.

111. *Ibid.*

112. *Ibid.*, 6 May 1924, p. 9.

113. *Ibid.*, 5 May 1924, p. 10.

114. *Ibid.*, 6 May 1924, p. 9.

In one of his recent studies published on the occasion of Gandhi Centenary in 1969 Dange again reviews that period of

(Footnote contd.)

Influenced by the success of great socialist October Revolution one of those young Indians who became the early intellectual pioneers of Marxist movement in the twenties,

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significance. He writes that when Gandhiji was preparing for action to overthrow the government in 1920-21, he wrote in *Young India* those famous roaring challenges of "Lion Shakes the Mane", and the "Dance of Death" to the satanic empire. The Chauri Chaura peasants, inspired by them, retaliated by killing a few policemen who fired on them. But Gandhiji suspended the movement. As a result of this unfortunate Gandhian action the British Empire, which was in suspense, felt relieved, the masses felt discomfited and defeated. The nation suffered a great retreat. Imperialism attacked, disrupted and shattered the revolutionary advance, by fomenting dissensions and Hindu-Muslim riots and what not. Mahatma Gandhi realised with horror the mistake of his tactics and how the enemy had taken advantage of his *ahimsa*. [S. A. Dange, *Mahatma Gandhi and History* (New Delhi, 1969), pp. 7-8].

Gandhiji was prompt to reply to all such criticisms by radicals. The author has already quoted them in detail in one of his other books, *Indian People Fight For National Liberation*, n. 105, p. 195. Suffice it is to cite one of his comments given nearly twenty years after the Chauri Chaura incident. With the perspective which time gives, Gandhiji, did not repent the drastic blunder he had made. Writing in *Harijan* on 12 April 1942 he referred to the limitations of the mighty movement of 1920-22 and gave reasons for his having taken what he called the "maddest risk" a person can take:

In South Africa too I introduced *Satyagraha* as an experiment. It was successful there because resisters were a small number in a compact area and, therefore, easily controlled. Here we had numberless persons scattered over a huge country. The result was that they could not be easily controlled or trained. And yet it is a marvel the way that they had responded. They might have responded much better and shown far better results. But I have no sense of disappointment in me over the results obtained. If I had started with men who accepted non-violence as a creed, I might have ended with myself. Imperfect as I am, I started with imperfect men and women and sailed on an uncharted ocean. Thank God that though the boat has not reached its haven it has proved fairly storm-proof.

was also C. G. Shah. From very close quarters he saw the epoch of undisputed sway of Gandhism when a large number of intellectuals were under the hypnotic spell of Gandhian ideology. Then he also saw the disillusionment of those intellectuals towards Gandhism after Chauri Chaura. Devoting himself thoroughly in the study of those disillusioning developments he wrote in 1926 a small pamphlet, "The Hundred Per Cent Indian", which was a Marxist critique of Gandhism. According to M. N. Roy it was the first Marxist work published by an Indian Marxist. Throwing his butts of criticism at Gandhiji and his ideas as reflected in *Hind Swaraj* Mr. Shah wrote :

The 100 per cent Indian is the arch enemy of all *collective* goals, *collective* ideals, *collective* hopes, of *collective* life in general. Surfeited with the ultra-individualistic, superegoistic, spiritual metaphysics of ancient India which sets forth "individual salvation" as the prime goal of human existence, the *ultima-ratio* of all individual human effort, the hundred per cent Indian, incarnating the reactionary religious individualism of the most spiritual and sterile type, disdains to work for social goals, for collective ideals . . . . His philosophy corresponds too little with social conditions of India....Gandhism is the last flash of the steadily declining feudal petti-bourgeois socio-economic philosophy of ancient Indians.<sup>115</sup>

It is true that there was much mystic and unscientific thought in Gandhi's *Indian Home Rule*. And inevitably his ideas were inadequate from the standpoint of the ideological requirements of full-fledged growth of our revolutionary anti-imperialist movement, yet the young academician in Mr. Shah was quite exaggerative. He overlooked the fact that in the given historical conditions the same social, moral and philosophical thoughts expressed the yearnings and aspirations of

crores of our countrymen awakened to play a new role against the perpetuation of domination and miseries of alien rule. Did not Gandhiji once said, "God dare not appear before the poor except in the form of bread", etc. Actually speaking, there were discerning divergent notes on the role of Gandhiji and national *bourgeoisie*. For example, Stalin, in his well known address delivered to the students of the University of the Toilers of the East on 18 May 1925, characterized the situation and task in India as follows :

The situation is somewhat different in countries like India. The fundamental and new feature in the conditions of existence of such colonies as India is not only that the national *bourgeoisie* has split into a revolutionary party and a compromising party, but primarily, that the compromising section of this *bourgeoisie* has already managed, in the main, to come to an agreement with imperialism . . . . This section of the *bourgeoisie*, the wealthiest and most influential section, is going over entirely to the camp of the irreconcilable enemies of the revolution, it is forming a bloc with imperialism against the workers and peasants of its own country. The victory of the revolution cannot be achieved unless this bloc is smashed. But in order to smash this bloc, fire must be concentrated on the compromising national *bourgeoisie*, its treachery exposed....<sup>116</sup>

Which section of the *bourgeoisie* was considered revolutionary by Stalin ? The big *bourgeois* interests represented by the Liberals and Moderates outside the Congress. Stalin clearly refers to "the petty-*bourgeoisie* as the revolutionary section of the national *bourgeoisie*." Thus all except the petty-*bourgeoisie* "are completely going over to the camp of the irreconcilable enemies of the revolution."

In his valuable study *Modern India* (1927) R. P. Dutt refers to the Congress leadership of Gandhiji as not the direct leadership of the big *bourgeoisie* but as that of *petty-bourgeois* intellectual forces which organized the Non-Co-operation Move-

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116. J. Stalin, *Works* (Moscow, Foreign Languages Publishing House, 1954), Vol. VII, p. 150.



ment. Dutt also dealt particularly with the role of Gandhiji : "The achievement of Gandhi consisted in that he, almost above of all the leaders, sensed and reached out to the masses. This was the first great achievement of Gandhi...and this positive achievement of Gandhi is bigger than all the idiosyncrasies and weaknesses which are brought against him, and constitutes his real contribution to Indian nationalism."<sup>117</sup> Gandhiji's second achievement, according to Palme Dutt, was his policy of action, of action of the masses, non-co-operation to win *swaraj* and at the height of his agitation, mass civil disobedience." He also stated that "non-violence and the spiritual content are not so important."<sup>118</sup>

Rajni Palme Dutt then proceeds to explain the Bardoli retreat:

Gandhi failed as the leader of the national struggle because he could not cut himself loose from the upper-class interests and prejudices in which he had been brought up.... The "spirituality" of Gandhi is only the expression of this class interest. All parasitic and propertied classes have to weave around themselves fog of confused language, superstition, tradition, religion, revivalism, etc., in order to hide from the masses the fact of their exploitation.<sup>119</sup>

The analysis propounded by Palme Dutt was undoubtedly a deeper one and thought-provoking. Broadly speaking, the Communist International and India Communists continued this approach to Gandhiji and the Congress till the Sixth Congress in 1928, when they adopted a more sectarian approach due to the developments in China, where the *bourgeoisie* had betrayed the national liberation movement, had gone over completely to Western imperialist Powers which had sliced entire China like a melon among themselves. The criticism of the 1928 World Congress was valid in respect to China. But to apply the stick of same measurement in regard to India was wrong. To conclude that like Sun Yet Senism in China,

117. R. Palme Dutt, *Modern India* (London, 1927), pp. 72-3,

118. Ibid.

119. Ibid, p. 80,

Gandhism in India too had switched from its originally radical *petty-bourgeois* movement and became converted into a *bourgeois* nationalist-reformist movement was historically mistaken. Under the leadership of Gandhiji the national *bourgeoisie* continued to fight against imperialism, as it was truly reflected in 1930, 1942 and 1945. The assessment of Indian situation was, however, complicated by the opposition of Gandhiji and his disciples to great labour strike movement of 1928 all over the country. The Sixth World Congress of the Communist International, therefore, directed the Indian Communists to accomplish the following tasks:

To help the toiling masses in India, to emancipate themselves from the influence of the *bourgeois* parties like Swarajists, to struggle against British Imperialism for the emancipation of the country, to achieve the unification of all communist groups and individual communists scattered throughout the country into a single, independent, and centralized party.

Dealing with other directions the Resolution stated:

In the Trade Unions, the Indian Communists must mercilessly expose the national-reformist leaders and carry on a decisive struggle for the conversion of the trade unions into genuine class organisations of the proletariat and for the replacement of the present reformist leadership by consistent revolutionary representatives from the mass of workers....The Communists must unmask the national-reformism of the Indian National Congress and oppose all the phrases of the Swarajists, Gandhists, etc., about passive resistance.

The criticism of one another by the Congress and the Communists weakened the national liberation front. Both the labour strike of 1928 and the salt *stayagraha* of 1930 could not be fully effective against the exploiting forces, whether alien or domestic. While the opposition of Gandhiji to labour strikes was anti-humanism pure and simple, the dubbing of the Con-

gress under the leadership of Gandhiji a pure and simple *bourgeois* organization gone over to the side of foreign imperialism was too leftist and sectarian an approach.

It may be recalled that in the beginning of 1929 the leading Communists of India were arrested and tried before the Sessions Court at Meerut. In the course of their defence they jointly delivered a historic statement in which they also reviewed the role of Indian *bourgeoisie* in the anti-imperialist movement. Their conclusions were quite sectarian and too leftist:

Although the revolution (in India) may be of *bourgeois-democratic* type, it does not necessarily follow that it will be carried through or led by the *bourgeois* class itself. The situation in India and the position of the *bourgeoisie* leads us to conclude that...the *bourgeoisie* will not lead the national revolution.

In the statement was also laid down:

Its (*Indian bourgeoisie's*) interests are bound up too closely with both British Imperialism and Indian feudalism, while the contradiction between its interests and those of the masses, its only possible revolutionary allies, is too direct to enable it to embark upon a policy of revolutionary overthrow of British rule.

This analysis was confirmed, the signatories of the statement held, by the non-revolutionary character and history of *bourgeois* nationalism. In support of their argument they cited two occasions when the Indian national *bourgeoisie* had been driven to organizing open mass movements against British Imperialism (the Non-Co-operation Movement of 1920-22 and the Salt *Satyagraha* of 1930-31). Analyzing their role on both these occasions the signatories of the statement stated:

The *bourgeois* groups who have financed and actually controlled the movements, and the *bourgeois* and petty-

*bourgeois* politicians who have actively led them, have been extremely careful to restrain their followers and prevent them from being revolutionary. It is a fundamental mistake to consider either the Non-Co-operation Movement or the Civil Disobedience Movement as revolutionary. They, of course, both contained certain revolutionary elements and possibilities of development, but these have not been allowed to develop.<sup>115</sup>

In fairness to Mahatma Gandhi, it may, however, be stated that learning from the ups and downs of his 1921 and 1931 movements when he launched the great movements of 1942 and 1945, though he called for observance of *ahimsa*, he never made it an absolute pre-condition and never called off the struggles merely because the mass of people retaliated the "leonine violence" of the oppressors with the counter-violence. The alien masters argued with him to give a halt to the violence in those hectic times and twitted him on his failure to make his followers adhere to high dictums, but he refused to react and blunder again and the non-violence ceased to be a decisive element in his direction of the mass movement. This all was possible due to the fact that the people taught Gandhiji and he learnt from them that the violence of the state apparatus cannot always be met by non-violence, that the people don't take seriously the question of ends and means. They do not bother to think that the great "ends" of liberation are incompatible with "ignoble" means of *ahimsa*, although it does not infer that *himsa* alone and every time, under all circumstances, is a necessary condition of change. In the final analysis, the initial source of *himsa* is the state apparatus of ruling agencies of exploitation. *Himsa* begins with them and ends with their end.

It cannot, however, be denied that during this long phase of struggle the Indian *bourgeoisie* played a dual role. While

115. *Communists Challenge Imperialism from the Dock: The General statement of 18 Accused in Meerut Conspiracy Case* (Calcutta, National Book Agency, 1967), pp. 82-84,

on the one hand, it fought against imperialism, it also compromised with the latter when its own interests were threatened by any radical mass action. C. G. Shah, a scholar of Marxism, wrote:

The Indian *bourgeoisie* created a genius in Gandhi. Gandhism met the double need of that class; one, to annex all political mass discontent in the country, transform it into mass struggles and use those struggles against imperialism to extort concessions for itself; the other, to prevent those mass struggles (assuming the form of class struggles) which would prove a danger not only to imperialism but also to Indian vested interests.<sup>121</sup>

### Critical Appraisal of the Bourgeoisie

In his analysis Shah pointed out still another disturbing fact, that the intelligentsia and the educated middle class which generally exerted a strong ideological impact over the thinking of the masses were socially and ideologically aligned to the *bourgeoisie* in considerable strength. Hence they became the propagators of *bourgeois* ideology among the masses. With an exception of a small minority, these groups during the British rule disseminated the religio-mystical ideology of the counter-revolutionary *bourgeoisie* among the Indian masses. And when the latter refused to halt at the command of saints and mystics and reflected their revolutionary fervour at places like Chauri Chaura, the *bourgeois* intellectuals avenged themselves by finding fault with the moral and "spiritual" capacities of the people. They branded them as a collection of moral weaklings who could not resist material temptations and appreciate the beauties of spiritual life. This only led to the confusion of the masses, gave them a wrong perspective of the conceptions and techniques of their liberation, reconciled them to their native exploiters, retarded the awakening of revolutionary consciousness among them and hindered

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121. C.G. Shah, n. 33, p. 152,

the revolutionary development of the anti-imperialist mass struggle in the interest of compromising *bourgeoisie*.<sup>122</sup>

The *International Press Correspondence* on 10 November 1922 published a long article called "A Review of the Indian Situation" in which M.N. Roy and Ellen Roy decried the non-violence and constitutionalism of the nationalist movement in India and clamoured for "revolutionary leadership" without regard to the consequences to life and property. The number of the same journal dated 14 December 1922 called for "armed insurrection."<sup>123</sup> Further, the number dated 30 December 1922 talked of "a growing revolutionary movement against the imperialistic powers" and said that the "Communist International must control the political action of its section in the various countries." Then comes the *Thesis on the Eastern Question* repeating that the Communist International supported all national revolutionary movements.<sup>124</sup>

122 *Ibid*, pp. 167-68 & 276.

123. Cited as Exhibit 2 in *Judgement in Bolshevik Conspiracy Case*, [Home (Pol.) Dept., Govt. of India, File No. 278/1925, p. 19].

124. This announcement of support for the struggle for independence all over Asia and Africa was made not only as revolutionary slogan but also on the basis that imperialism is in itself the culmination of capitalism and its elimination by *bourgeois* nationalist movements is progressive step towards evolution. There is no hesitation in saying that the nationalist movements in Asian and African countries gained moral support by the mere existence of a Bolshevik Russia. It may be of special interest to the people of Africa and Asia that the Soviet Union has not only theoretically inspired them to liberate from colonial domination but has also actively assisted in their process of national liberation and jubilantly celebrated their victories on appropriate occasions. Only recently on the occasion of celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution when the parade, one of the biggest in Soviet history, rumbled through Moscow's Red Square, a special float in the parade depicted Asia and Africa "breaking their chains" of colonial slavery. On the float were girls dressed in costumes of Asian and African countries. One girl was dressed in a bright yellow and blue *sari* and another in a *shalwar* and *qameez* symbolizing achieve-

These statements were against imperialism and set out the procedure to be adopted to organize revolution of the masses in India and other countries and the formation of Communist nucleus or centres<sup>125</sup> which should continue their illegal apparatus, for the economic emancipation of exploited was only attainable by expropriation of expropriators and this could not be done by peaceful non-violent means. "It is ridiculous to say", added Roy, "we are non-violent revolutionaries."<sup>126</sup>

Similar sentiments were shortly afterwards echoed in a manifesto composed by M.N. Roy who submitted it to the Presidium of the Fourth Congress of the Communist International for approval. In due course of time this manifesto was sent to the annual session of the Indian National Congress

(Previous footnote cont.)

ment of Indian Independence from British Imperialism. An equally heartening feature of this anniversary was the gala reception by the Soviet Ambassador on 7 November 1967 in New Delhi, where one of the star attractions was the 70-year-old Rafiq Ahmad. He was among those Indians who fought by the side of Bolsheviks in 1917 for the victory of the October Revolution. He was decorated with a special medal to mark the occasion. The freedom-loving people of Asia and Africa have also responded in the same enthusiastic breath to this active and positive Soviet interest displayed in the liberation of Afro-Asian world. While Hanoi, the capital of North Viet Nam, offered Moscow a fragment of the 2,500th United States aircraft shot down over North Vietnam as a gift to make the fiftieth anniversary of the Revolution; the Prime Minister of India, Mrs. Indra Gandhi, rushed to Moscow by a special plane to join in the celebration of the Revolution Jubilee. It was also a happy coincidence that Mrs. Gandhi is the third generation of Nehrus to attend special October celebration. Her grand-father and father were present at the tenth anniversary of the October Revolution when they were invited by the Soviet Government in those early days of Soviet power. [*The Indian Express* (New Delhi), 8 November 1967, pp. 1 & 7, cols. 7 & 2].

125. Cited as Exhibit 3 in *Judgement in Bolshevik conspiracy case*, n. 123, pp. 19-20. See also his appeal published in the *Vanguard* on 1 March 1923 [*Times of India* (Bombay), 6 May 1924, p. 8].

126. *Times of India* (Bombay), 6 May 1924, p. 8.

held at Gaya in December 1922. The following extracts from the same are relevant:

British rule in India was established by force; therefore it can and will be overthrown only by a violent revolution. We are not in favour of resorting to violence if it can be helped; but for self-defence, the people of India must adopt violent means, without which the foreign domination based upon violence cannot be ended. The people of India are engaged in this great revolutionary struggle. The Communist International is whole-heartedly with them....The Indian people must be free or be crushed to death by British Imperialism; there is no middle course. And people of India will never liberate themselves from the present slavery without a sanguinary revolutionary struggle. In leading the struggle for national liberation the Indian National Congress should keep the following points always in view:

1. That the normal development of the people cannot be assured unless imperialist domination is completely destroyed;
2. That no compromise with the British rulers will improve the position of the majority of the nation;
3. That the British domination cannot be overthrown without violent revolution and;
4. That the workers and peasants are alone capable of carrying the revolution to victory.<sup>127</sup>

In order to create a new mass consciousness the manifesto suggested:

The necessity of developing the revolutionary consciousness of the masses demands the adoption of an economic-

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127. *Conviction.....In Bolshevik Conspiracy case*, [Home (pol.) Dept., Govt. of India, File No. 261/1924, p. 110].

Although no official comment was made by the Congress, but the nationalist English Weekly, *Independent* did not agree with Roy's programme. "Our faith is non-violence and non-co-operation and it is based on love-force. Mr. Roy's plan has no room whatever for love-force". [*U. P. Native Newspaper Reports* (Lucknow), No 1 of 1923, p. 7] For further study see also Zafar Imam, *Colonialism in East-West Relations* (New Delhi, Eastman Publications, 1969), pp. 180-82].



programme in addition to the political programme of a republic to be established through a revolution. By leading the rebellious poor peasantry against the reactionary and loyalist landed aristocracy, the Congress will... assail the very bedrock of British rule. The native army which maintains British domination in India, is recruited from among the poor peasantry. So a programme of agrarian revolution will win the native troops to the cause of national freedom. In conclusion, we express our confidence in the ultimate success of your cause which is destruction of British Imperialism by the revolutionary might of the masses. Let me assure you again of the support and co-operation of the advanced proletariat of the world in this historic struggle of the Indian people. Down with the British Imperialism; Long Live the Free people of India.<sup>128</sup>

In his letter written to Dange from Moscow on 2 November 1924 Roy advocated mass action, the object being to combat, on one hand, inactivity resulting from spiritualization of politics under the leadership of orthodox non-co-operators and on the other hand, the movement towards the camp of compromisers under the pretext of pragmatic politics.<sup>129</sup>

Roy was undoubtedly a superb intellectual and remarkably well versed in theories. And his interpretation of Indian political scene from the Marxist point of view, was admired by all. But his impractical nature had obstructed the chances of setting up a unified Indian revolutionary movement. Moreover, his was a revolution through post office.

The person who brought the message of Roy to the Gaya Congress was Abani Mukherji. On this occasion he had talks with prominent Congressmen who were anxious to co-operate with the Left. Judging from what Mukherji told his wife, Rose Fitingov, now residing in Leningrad after the death of

128. *Ibid*, See also M. Ahmad, n. 54, pp. 266-86.

129. *The Bolshevik Conspiracy Trial of 8 Indians* (Bombay, Times of India, 1924), p. 28.

her husband, he also met Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru who appreciated the influence of socialist revolution on the Indian liberation movement.<sup>130</sup> Shripad Amrit Dange, now Chairman of the Communist Party of India, also participated in these talks.<sup>131</sup> It looks that the radical line of M.N. Roy was not accepted by Dange and others. They held that he did not appreciate the vital necessity for a broad anti-imperialist front, apparently did not want to wait for the maturing of conditions needed to eliminate colonial rule. He banked entirely on the pistol and rifle.<sup>132</sup> He failed to realize that for a longer or shorter period of time the Indian Communist Party would be a small party with a but few members, having only weak resources, incapable of reaching on the basis of its programme and by means of its own activity, a substantial number of peasants and workers. On the other hand, on the basis of the demand for national independence, it would become possible to mobilize large masses. It had already been amply demonstrated by experience.<sup>133</sup> Writing on 16 December 1922 the *Socialist* said that they were not one with Roy's many a point of view and they had been all along preaching "sober, educative and instructive socialist doctrines" from the point of view that it was the best under the circumstances for the welfare of the people as a whole. The paper added, "We are what can be best termed as 'Congress Socialists'....We hope telegrams (like those of Retuer's about M.N. Roy's Bolshevik programme for India) will be

130. I. Aneronov, "Awaking East", *New Times* (Moscow), 5 April 1967, p. 13.

131. *Ibid.*

132. *Ibid.*

133. Likewise the Fourth Comintern Congress (1922) also expressly laid down in its thesis on the Eastern questions that they supported every national-revolutionary movement against Imperialism. The united anti-imperialist front slogan ought to be advanced in the colonial East. The need for the same was based on the prospect of a long and hard struggle against world imperialism which called for the mobilization of all revolutionary forces. [Jane Degras, *The Communist International (1919-1943): Documents* (Oxford University Press, 1956), Vol. 1, pp. 383-93].

censored and prevented from reaching us, if the seeds of violent revolution are not to be sown.”<sup>134</sup>

On 28 October 1922 the *Socialist* was suggesting how could the Non-Co-operation movement utilize labour strikes against the British Government. In a comment the paper quoted a statement by the Chairman of the East India Railway, according to which the Company lost 1½ crores of rupees in consequence of the last strike; of this loss 1,44,00,000 rupees fell to the share of the Government. Then, if the loss incurred by other industries paralysed by the shortage of coal was taken into account, the total damage to the capitalist class which controlled the Government became considerable, pointed out the *Socialist*. The journal continued:

So here is an instance of the ability of the working class to deal severe blows to Government through the capitalist. This should teach us in which direction the tactics of non-co-operation can be the most effectively applied.

Continuing its comment the journal pointed out that the triple boycott of the councils, courts and schools taken together could not inflict any loss on the Government. The idea of injuring the prestige of the Government was erroneous, because the Government would not cease ruling so long as it did not become impossible or unprofitable to rule. The workers lost in wages the total of a little less than 7 lakhs of rupees. So the injury caused to the Government and the “capitalist exploiters” was much more in proportion to the suffering of the fighters. This much, however, could not be said of the other methods of Non-Co-operation.<sup>135</sup>

A little earlier on 16 August 1922 the *Socialist* commented on the controversy going on in Congress circles over the resuming of the Mass Civil Disobedience. Forecasting the role of the Government the paper said that if the Congress started Civil Disobedience on a mass scale in all provinces at one and the

134. *Lombay Selection from Newspapers, July-December 1922* (Govt. of India, 1923), p. 1280.

135. *Ibid*, p. 1100.

same time, the military would be set in motion to collect taxes and keep "order". then? If all the transport workers, i.e. railway men, drivers, etc. sat peacefully at home, not a single military corps could move from one centre to another, because the modern centralized system of the Government rested more on the railways and means of communication than non-co-operators were disposed to believe. If that was so what would the Congress do before starting Civil Disobedience? They must organize labour. But the paper alleged that the Congress "rulers" had altogether forgotten the resolutions passed at Amritsar and Nagpur Congress. The Congress had not yet spent a single pie to begin to organizing the mill, transport or agricultural workers, "while Rs. 17,00,000 are delivered in the hands of a financial dictator, from whom we hear only belated appeals and nothing more."<sup>136</sup>

What inference an impartial observer can draw from these criticisms of Congress? Did they imply that from here onwards the National Congress was to be considered a reactionary and counter-revolutionary body? So far as the indigenous Communists, who had grown out of this movement, were concerned there was no question of considering it as reactionary. They were still loyal to the Congress movement and held that it should be backed. To them criticism of national body did not mean antipathy to it. In fact they held that a United National Front was a prerequisite to the achieving of national liberation. According to a version they in the beginning emphasized so much the national unity that they objected to abolition of landlordism and agitation against *bourgeoisie*.<sup>137</sup>

Meanwhile, Roy continued his campaign unabated. On 1 January 1923 the *Advance Guard* contained a letter to the All-India National Congress held at Gaya. Important passages from the letter:

136. *Ibid*, p. 870.

137. M. N. Roy, *Political Letters* (Zurich, 1924 ed.), p. 55.

The economic, social and cultural progress of the Indian people demands the complete separation of India from Imperialistic Britain. To realise this separation is the goal of revolutionary nationalism. This goal, however, cannot be attained by negotiation nor by peaceful means. Imperial connection in any form stands for nothing less than the control of the destinies of the Indian people by and for the interests of Britain's ruling class, at best this control will be exercised in conjunction with the native upper classes. But the control will be there, obstructing the freedom of the nation.

The letter also pointed out:

The forces that are inimical to Britain's imperialism are, at the same time, dangerous to the security of the aristocracy. Hence the loyalty of the latter to the foreign ruler.

The same letter continued:

The relation of the Communist International with the struggle of the oppressed peoples is inspired by revolutionary idealism and based upon mutual interest. Our sympathy and support are not confined to empty phrases couched in sweet words. We must stand shoulder to shoulder with the people of India in their struggle against imperialism. Therefore, we will fail in our revolutionary duty if we do not point out to you the mistakes that weaken the struggle and harm the cause of Indian independence.

This letter was purported to be from "Secretary Humbert Drox" of the Presidium of the Fourth Congress of the Communist International. It concluded by expressing confidence in the ultimate success of the national cause, which was the destruction of British imperialism by the revolutionary might of the masses.<sup>138</sup>

138. Cited in *Judgement in Bolshevik Conspiracy case*, n. 100, pp. 22-3.

According to Shaukat Usmani a message was also sent by Lenin to the Gaya Congress session. This was in a direct call in keeping with Lenin's words at the Second Congress of the Comintern.<sup>139</sup>

M. N. Roy also wrote directly to C. R. Das offering the Indian National Congress through him "the unflinching support of the most powerful revolutionary body of the world" on certain conditions.<sup>140</sup>

Meanwhile a leaflet subscribed from Zurich (Switzerland) on 3 February 1923 and bearing the heading "An open letter to Chittaranjan Das and his followers "who wanted *swaraj* for the masses and not for middle class alone urged them with reference to "succumbing" of the Congress at Gaya, to adopt "more revolutionary methods and form a "Revolutionary and People's Party."<sup>141</sup>

But the Congress did not approve of the growth of class consciousness among the Indian masses. It advocated to their gatherings such connotations and concepts as the collaboration of the class interests of the workers and capitalists, unchallenged supremacy of mythical all-national *supra-class* interests to which the the people as a whole must sacrifice their class interests;<sup>142</sup> "trusteeship" of their property

139. Shaukat Umani, "India and Russian Revolution", *Mainstream* (New Delhi) 19 July 1967, p 38.

140. Cited in *Judgement in Bolshevik Conspiracy Case*, n. 100, p. 25. The letter is also included in the appendix of this volume.

141. *Ibid*, p. 15.

142. Following extract from President C. R. Das's speech at the Gaya Congress is quite revealing:

There is an apprehension in the minds of some non-co-operators that the cause of non-co-operation will suffer if we exploit Labour for Congress purposes. I confess again I do not understand the argument....If we are "exploiting" boys of tender years and students of colleges, if we are "exploiting" the women of India, if we are "ex-

(Footnote Contd.)

and wealth reflected in the Gandhian doctrine "Capitalists are fathers and workers are children"; and similar other postulates. The Congress leaders, however, could not turn their attention away from the prevailing class structure created by modern capitalism. Hence they extended their recognition to the class division and pleaded for the creation of separate class organizations of the working class people (irrespective of communal divergencies), at least in the economic sphere, such as non-communal trade unions.<sup>143</sup> But it is also a fact that they declared that such trade unions should serve as essential instruments to establish class harmony of the proletariat with the *bourgeoisie*.<sup>144</sup> It is further true that due to the inherent class contradictions between the interests of workers and those of *bourgeoisie* such trade unions only changed the course of working class struggle which alone could liquidate their wage slavery under capitalism backed by foreign imperialism. It alone could improve their conditions within the system of capitalism itself. The diverting of the masses to the path of class conciliation by the vested interests in the Congress could only perpetuate the class structure of indigenous society and benefit the local *bourgeoisie*.

Unlike Western capitalism the Indian capitalist-landlord system was gravely endangered by the democratic and socialist forces from the very early phase of capitalist development. So both the Indian *bourgeoisie* as well as its intellectual vanguard, consciously or unconsciously, emphasized on the need of preser-

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ploiting" the whole of the middle classes irrespective of their creed and caste and occupations, may I ask what justification is there for leaving our Labourers and the Peasants ?

[*Report of the Thirty-seventh Session of the Indian National Congress held at Gaya on 26-31 December 1924, p. 43*].

143. For further study see the Presidential Address delivered by C. R. Das at the Gaya Session of the National Congress [*Ibid*, pp. 43-44].

144. For further study see *Ibid*.

ving religion as a spiritual prop and class collaboration as a basic necessity of the movement from the very beginning. It dared not adopt materialism as a philosophical ideological technique in its limited struggles against alien domination. On the other hand, it financed anti-materialist movements and conserved the unscientific ideologies. The consequences, therefore, were quite fatal for the national liberation movement. Not only was its tempo of advancement slowed down, the number of participants also became limited. However, an important fact of our national life was not to be ignored. The fact that it was very difficult task to break away from the mysticism and religion which dominated the vast population of India is revealed in a letter written by Muzaffar Ahmad *alias* Mahtab Deen, one of the early pioneers of Marxist movement in India, to M. N. Roy on 15 February 1923. An extract from it reads:

I am not speaking of Bengal only but of the whole of India. Unless real worker's organizations are made, there can be no work of ours....Unless labour and the peasantry can be thoroughly roused many Hindus desiring freedom will also not join us. It is the unallayed truth that the Communist principle does not appeal to the hearts of even very patriotic Hindus. It is not easy thing to break up the instincts of many thousand years.<sup>145</sup>

It may be mentioned in passing that a convention of the Socialist Party led by the late Dr Lohia was held on 13 June 1962 at Gorakhpur to study the cause of the national revolution. The convention took note of the difference between the Algerian and Indian struggle for freedom. It said that in India 1 man in 3,000 was imprisoned while in Algeria about 1 in 100 had been killed. The Indian Revolution had been something which had not concerned the people very much. The statement further laid down that there were deeper and more abiding historical factors. The Indian thinking over the last 1,500

145. Cited in *Judgement in Bolshevik Conspiracy case*, n. 100, pp. 27-8,



years had been divided into two compartments, one abstract and the other concrete, without any relationship between them. India is acclaimed a "land of synthesis" which is a pleasant word but absurd when it means yielding to a powerful opponent. Much of the country's synthesis has been of this nature.<sup>146</sup>

In one of his latest studies *Guilty Men of India's Partition*, Dr. Rammanohar Lohia alleges that the intelligentsia did not succeed in overcoming or even sought completely to overcome, the state of total unrelatedness between India's mass and the upper classes. In fact, Gandhiji put innumerable people into action as few others had done in the history of the nation. But there was something wrong, he alleges, with the activating; it looked to be much more a universal phenomenon than it actually was. A statistical evaluation of national independence struggle made by the author shows that both those who actively participated by jail-going or donations or suffering in whatever meagre form and those who passively participated by attending meetings or receptions would disclose two disturbing facts. The majority of the active organizers belonged to the well-to-do high classes. The passive participants were also, in a majority of the cases, from the high classes, except on those very infrequent times when some section of the backward classes were brought into a movement of the instant.<sup>147</sup> According to the estimation of M.N. Roy also, Indian nationalism expressed the political ideology and aspirations of a "youthful bourgeoisie" which enjoyed the advantage of "shielding its exploitation under the cry against foreign oppression." This nationalism lacked the tradition of a national unity, but it relied on the reaction against a common oppression. According to M.N. Roy the nationalists were more interested in turning out a popular demonstration than to develop the revolutionary consciousness of the masses. So they could not infuse any vitality in the national movement in spite of its more radical

146. *Statesman* (New Delhi), 17 June 1962, p. 5, cols. 3-4.

147. Rammanohar Lohia, *Guilty Men of India's Partition* (Allahabad, 1960), pp. 62-3

appearance.<sup>148</sup> In Lohia's view the perpetuation of this anomaly led not only to the partition of India but also caused the "march backward of the Indian revolution, a text book illustration of revolution's betrayal such as never happened in human history.<sup>149</sup> Within the nationalist movement there arose a ruling class, in Lohia's view, unparalleled in all the world for its duration or its ability to adjust, alongside of its stubbornness to preserve its identity. "Sugary sentimentalism" became the part of the Indian character deriving sustenance from the absence of identification. Gandhiji was alleged by the author to have done nothing to transform this character. He had, therefore, to retrieve his defeats with greatest probable speed.<sup>150</sup> And the unrelatedness between the intelligentsia and the masses was bound to weaken the independence struggle. It could only on few selected occasions, face the alien adversary in its full stature. Its leader Mahatma Gandhi acted in such manner that he seemed to "blow hot and cold at the same time." Such duplicity, said Dr. Lohia, right at the source of independence movement was bound to result in misfortune.<sup>151</sup>

Another peculiar feature of this upper-class nationalist movement was that some of its leaders became critics of the Soviet system-the only system which openly defended their struggle against British Imperialism. An incident is worth quoting: Mohammed Akbar Khan Qureshi, one of the *Muhajirin* trained in Tashkent Military School in 1920-21 to liquidate British Imperialism, had been deputed by the leaders of Communist International to India with a mandate to contact the leaders of the Khilafat and Congress parties. The Congress High Command, however, refused to have any truck with Communist Russia and the question of military aid was rejected. Akbar Khan did not get any support from the Khilafat leaders either.<sup>152</sup> It

148. M. N. Roy, *India in Transition*, (Geneva, 1922) pp. 159 & 180.

149. Lohia, n. 147, p. 63.

150. *Ibid*, p. 67.

151. *Ibid*, p. 68.

152. Bitterly disappointed and disillusioned, Akbar Khan started on his  
(footnote continued.)

looks that they relied only on the biased news circulated by the British colonialists in regard to the Soviet changes. Most particular among them was C.R. Das who condemned the violent means adopted by the Soviet leaders to achieve their ends. Speaking in support of Mahatma's insistence on non-violent means for the achievement of Indian liberation and exemplifying his standpoint by quotations from world history, he, in his presidential address at Gaya session, remarked that the shape which the Russian Revolution had then assumed was due to the attempt to force Marxian doctrines and dogmas on the unwilling genius of Russia. Showing his utter ignorance of the developments in Soviet Russia where the Bolsheviks led by Lenin had practically given a death-blow to the counter-revolutionaries including foreign imperialistic intruders, Das was emphatically optimistic in aserting, "Violence will again fall. If I have read the situation accurately (which he had not) I expect a counter-revolution. The soul of Russia must struggle to free herself from the Socialism of Karl Marx."<sup>153</sup>

Gandhiji himself did not take so strong an attitude in 1924. He himself admitted his ignorance of what actually Bolshevism was. He said: "I have not been able to study it, I do

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way back to Russia, but he was arrested while re-crossing the North-West Frontier Province. The only incriminating evidence on his person was the mandate from Tashkent, inscribed on silk, and he tried to save himself by swallowing it. In spite of this he was sentenced to three years imprisonment. While in prison, he wrote a report of all that had happened in code language and bound it up in a volume of the Quran, but the British Intelligence intercepted it while it was being smuggled into Afghanistan. The result was another sentence—this time for seven years. He spent the entire period of ten years in the Peshawar and Amraoti jails, without even the usual remission given to the ordinary prisoners.

[Facts cited by Shaukat Usmani, "India and Russian Revolution", *Mainstream* (Delhi), 22 July 1967, p. 22].

153. *Report of the Thirty-Seventh Session of the Indian National Congress held at Gaya in December 1922*, p. 29.

not know whether it is good for Russia in the long run." Nevertheless, he was repelled by its violent and atheistic aspects.<sup>154</sup> Partly these biased and ignorant considerations and partly the upper class origin of the Congress leaders culminated in a state of affairs when in December 1924 Congress leaders did not consider it advisable to pay tribute to a departed leader like Lenin who had unflinchingly supported the freedom movement of all the oppressed nations and nationalities in Afro-Asian world. A resolution was proposed in the All-India Congress Committee, expressing a deep sense of sorrow at the death of Lenin. It could not be passed, the entire leadership voting in opposition. Gandhiji, who presided, went so far as to declare that if it were constitutional for him to rule out that resolution out of the order, he would not take a second to do so, on the ground that it lay beyond the activities of the Congress.<sup>155</sup>

### **First Breach in the Congress under Gandhi's leadership**

The Bardoli decisions not only disappointed the revolutionary masses, but also led to the creation of the split in the rank of nationalists. A number of Gandhiji's disciples and colleagues failed to understand why he should be so perturbed at the minor violent incidents.

This was the first breach in the unity that Gandhiji had been able to create in the ranks of nationalist movement ever

[54. *Young India*, 11 December 1924.

[55. *The Tribune* (Lahore), 1 January 1925. It was, however, only by 1927-28 that there occurred a change in the thinking of Gandhiji, chiefly as a consequence of the experiences and reactions of Jawaharlal Nehru who had visited the Soviet Union. Although he firmly opposed violence, he did not question the fact that the "Bolshevik ideal has behind it the purest sacrifice of countless men and women who had had given up their all for its sake and an ideal that is sanctified by the sacrifices of such master spirits as Lenin cannot go in vain : The noble example of their renunciation will be emblazoned for ever and quicken and purify the ideal as time passes." [*Young India*, 15 Nov. 1928].

since the times of the anti-Rowlatt agitation and the Non-Cooperation Movement. Non-violence and boycott were the techniques through which Gandhiji had succeeded in rallying the liberals as well as the militant elements: his exhortation for anti-imperialist mass action roused the militant wing. Nevertheless, the horror with which Gandhiji saw the revolutionary deeds of the masses, the unexpected haste in which he called for the suspension of Mass Civil Disobedience brought again to the forefront all those basic assumptions around which the nationalist ranks had earlier been at loggerheads.

The question, "What was to be the technique of struggle for the realization of national emancipation," had haunted and taxed the minds of the people ever since the pioneering of national liberation movement. Was it to be peaceful negotiations with the colonial authorities, or incessant militant fight against their perpetuation? Was it to be a technique of rallying the masses in unflinching and uncompromising actions against the British or a technique of reliance on the constitutional machinery, however imperfect, to secure fresh doses of reforms. These ticklish issues, which had once split the Moderates from the Extremists, again became lively, but in another shape.

Motilal Nehru, C. R. Das and others who vehemently protested against the Bardoli decisions, were by no means Extremists. In fact some of them, like the elder Nehru, had actually rallied round the moderate camp in the earlier phase of the national struggle. They had come under the banner of Gandhiji because they felt that his technique of rallying the masses against British imperialism would to a considerable extent pressurize the latter. They believed that this sort of pressure would compel imperialism to open negotiations with the nationalist forces, and that, by shrewd utilization of mass actions unleashed by Gandhian movement, they could extract more and more constitutional reforms. So they were not worried over some minor or major "non-violence" at certain places; these would unavoidably occur for which the Congress would and should take no responsibility. They did not share the

pessimism displayed by Mahatma Gandhi in regard to such incidents. That is why they were antagonized when they learnt of the Bardoli decisions.

Any how, when the suspension of the Mass Disobedience was clearly written on the slate, they raised the inevitable question: What next ? They impatiently sidetracked those who argued that the masses would gradually but inevitably imbibe the spirit of non-violence, thus paving the way for the Congress to make adequate preparations for launching the national liberation struggle in purely non-violent way as visualized by the Mahatma. Judging Gandhiji's method of non-violent non-cooperation from a sheer practical angle, they arrived at the conclusion that if the suspension of the Mass Disobedience Movement was to be endorsed then the national movement should search for new strategies.

The search for new techniques led them to conclude that the newly constituted legislative councils should be used rather than boycotted. But, no sooner their decision that Council-entry would be made purely with an idea of wrecking the superstructure of British imperialism from within was known, it enraged the orthodox non-co-operators, who insisted on loyalty to Gandhiji and strict adherence to the programme of Civil Disobedience. The following extract is quoted as an illustration of the spirit in which the No-Changers viewed the decision of the Pro-Changers. In a leading article the *Rajasthan Kesri* (Wardha) remarked:

The Pro-Council party argues that it insists upon the change with a view to wrecking the Councils and causing a split between the Moderates and the bureaucracy. We fail to see what useful purpose will be served by giving undue importance to the Moderates. The best course under the circumstances would be to leave them alone. If the people honestly work out the constructive programme, as has been laid down by the Congress, we are sure the day will soon dawn when the power of the Moderates will dis-

appear along with that of the bureaucracy. It is, indeed, a thousand pities that those who are attempting this day to alienate the sympathies of our Moderate brethren from the bureaucracy, should themselves be desirous, be it with any motive, of gracing the Council chairs and sitting shoulder to shoulder with the bureaucrats. To advocate entry into the Councils at a time when the greatest man of the world and a true son of Mother India is rotting in the Yeravda Jail is to cast a stigma on his fair fame. It must be remembered that while the Councils stand for evolution, *Satyagraha* stands for revolution. A beneficent rule may be secured by recourse to evolution, but *swaraj* is impossible. The people should, therefore, beware of the share and delusion of the Councils, for once they take to evolution they cannot hope to see prosperous day in the near future.<sup>156</sup>

Matters came to a head at the Gaya session and the sessions subsequent, which presented a spectacle of a pandemonium in the deliberations which sometimes appeared to reach a climax as dangerous as that of Surat. The No-Changers went on beating the old drum in reaffirming their opinion that Civil Disobedience was the only "civilized and effective" substitute for armed rebellion.<sup>157</sup> But the Pro-Changers charged their opponents with not being pragmatic enough in the use of new innovations to beat a shrewd and diplomatic adversary.<sup>158</sup>

On being defeated at Gaya the Pro-Changers left no stone unturned to decry the orthodox Non-Co-operators. In utter disappointment they charged that the achievements at Gaya were a huge wastage from the viewpoint of national progress, the resolutions in their view only conformed the poli-

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156. P. C. Bamford, Deputy Director of Central Intelligence Bureau, *Histories of Non-Co-operation and Khilafat Movement*, [Home (Pol.) Dept., Govt. of India, File No. 185/1925, pp 64-5].

157. Home (Pol.) Dept., Govt. of India, File No. 135/1922, p. 25.

158. *Ibid.* For further study see Zafar Imam, n. 127, p. 180.

tical mistakes of the two or three years past. In their view one would easily bear out this remark when he came to know that the resolution on Civil Disobedience was recklessly passed.<sup>159</sup>

In consequence of rejection of the resolution advocating entry into the Councils C. R. Das resigned the office of the Congress President so that the majority might form a working Committee from its own rank. A manifesto announcing the formation of a new party by the Pro-Changers was issued : "Whereas we are convinced that several important items in programme of work adopted by Gaya session are not conducive to speedy attainment of *swaraj* and that several other items have been rejected, we do hereby form and constitute ourselves into a party within Congress to be called Congress-Khilafat-Swaraj Party."<sup>160</sup> It accepted the creed of attaining *swaraj* by all peaceful and legitimate means; and the principle of non-violent non-co-operation. It appointed Das leader and Pandit Motilal Nehru, B. Sasmal, B. Patel and Khaliquzzaman as secretaries. Referring to the formation of the new party within the Congress the *Socialist* of S. A. Dange remarked on 6 January 1923:

It is no use saying that the Dissenters raised their head after the Mahatma was sent to jail. After the debacle at Bardoli, the tension and whirlpool of activity had not subsided enough to put new lines of thought before the country. Had the Mahatma's arrest been delayed for some days more, had the country been thrown into the state of apathy, in which it is now by the new programme and had the Mahatma not taken a new and superior line of activity, the Dissenters would have surely done what they are doing now. This new dissenting party is in our opinion nearer to

159. P. C. Bamford, n. 156, p. 65.

160. Home (Pol ) Department, Govt. of India, File No. 135/1922, p. 26. For further study see also M. N. Roy, *The Future of Indian Politics*, p. 17 and *Fragments of a Prisoner's Diary*, Vol. II, p. 114 and Zafar Imam, n. 127, p. 221.



the Mahatma's methods of warfare than the Orthodox Stagnants are. The new party wants swift changes of tactics and methods, wants to use every avenue available to attack the Government, to work up the feelings of the people to the pitch of heroism, where they can offer sacrifice, without hesitation and pain. And in all these the Mahatma was the masterhand which was the key to his success. We mean to utilize the key with swiftness and see if we can succeed, not in winning swaraj, for the new party does not believe in winning swaraj, for the new party does not presume to do so with the little changes that it proposes but in effecting a substantial advance on the position where the country stands today, politically and mentally.<sup>161</sup>

The split in the Congress received considerable attention from the press, and paper like the *Karmavir* and *Pranavir* which were from the beginning opposed to the policy of Council-entry, supported the resolution on Civil Disobedience passed at the Gaya Congress. *Karmavir* wrote as follow: "The whole country will feel a sense of relief and pride that the Congress has risen to the occasion of the grave crisis in the national movement. The resolution is in nature of an honest compromise. It is an expression of the national will and few who are alive to the complexity of the political situation will question its wisdom." *Swatantra Hindusthan* and *Taruna Maharashtra* were scathing in their comments. "It is doubtful," *Swatantra Hindustan* said, "how for this compromise will establish a lasting peace in Congress. From the non-co-operators' point of view the compromise is a bitter pill which the nation is called upon to swallow as a preventive against the collapse of the Congress."<sup>162</sup>

To keep up the show of unity in the Congress the All-India Congress Committee, which met at Bombay, tentatively decided that the Pro-Changers should be permitted to contest the

161. *Selections from Newspapers published in the Bombay Presidency* (Govt. of India Press), January to June 1923, p. 7.

162. P. C. Bamford, n. 156, p. 65.

elections and the two wings of the Congress should work in harmony. Therefore, the papers belonging to both wings carried on a vigorous election campaign with a view to keeping the Moderates out of the Councils, and in this they succeeded beyond expectation.

In spite of this show of unity between the two wings of the Congress the No-Changers were smarting under a sense of injustice, inasmuch as they believed Council-entry to be repugnant to principle of Non-Co-operation. So, after the release of Gandhiji they made a final attempt to exclude the Swarajists from the Congress organization and also to revive the old controversy on Council-entry; but when as a result of continued deliberations between Gandhiji and the Swarajists a policy of "live and let live" was adopted by both the wings of the Congress and the three boycotts which had already failed were formally called off to placate the Swarajists, the national press applauded Gandhiji's decision.

It will not be inappropriate to recall here that the Councils initiated under the Montagu-Chelmsford Scheme of 1919 and in which the Swarajists entered to enhance the national interests, symbolized nothing but an undemocratic constitutional framework imposed by colonial rulers. The Act of 1919 denied about 94 per cent and at a later stage the 1935 Act denied 72 per cent of the adult population of India the right to vote and elect representatives to these constitutional frameworks.<sup>163</sup> Only the landed aristocracy, rich *bourgeoisie* were, therefore, the privileged groups to act as basic democrats in India, ignoring the vast population stretching all over the continent. In fact, the notable feature of the reforms and concessions which the colonial rulers introduced in line with their political strategy to pacify and counterbalance different social strata of indigenous life and to obstruct or finish nationalist movement led by the nationalists lay in the point that they were imparted

163. R. N. Aggarwala, *National Movement & Constitutional Development of India* (Delhi, Metropolitan Book Co. Pvt. Ltd., 1967 ed.), p. 275.

to the various groups of indigenous vested interests. Not only the Councils were elected on the basis of narrow franchise but even items like the inclusion of Indians into the Viceroy's or Governor's Executive Councils, Indianization of services and concessions like subsidies and safeguards to Indian industries in the economic sphere proved beneficial only to the *bourgeoisie* and other upper classes of Indian society. Similarly, the grant of special electorates and fixation of a definite numbers of seats for the Muslim and other minorities, because of the controlled franchise, were politically taken advantage of only by the landed aristocracy and capitalist groups of those communities, who campaigned for seats in the Councils, posts and jobs in the administrative apparatus, appointments on Government Committees to stand on par with their Hindu upper class competitors.

It is true that the Swarajists, in the course of their membership of the Councils and Assembly, did off and on attack the issues injurious to the interests of the masses like the Public Safety Bill, but they also concentrated on defending, propagating and enhancing the interests of the businessmen, mercantile classes and industrial groups\*, on whose support they obviously depended for re-election. Some of the recent studies like *Voice of Freedom* published on occasion of centenary celebrations of Pandit Moti Lal Nehru, clearly illustrate this fact. However, it must be admitted that a fight for the rights of the Indian *bourgeoisie*, which removed the obstacles to the industrial development of the Indian society and assisted the process of expanding the scope of the general productive forces of the country, was a fight of progressive character. But the colonial rulers could not make substantial concessions to the Indian masses since it was only by exploiting the latter that it obtained its super-profits. Any economic concessions made at this juncture by the colonial rulers to the Indian *bourgeoisie* implied that the share of the latter in the total exploitation of the Indian people by the British and Indian capitalists increased.

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\* For Soviet assessment of Swarajists see Zafar Imam, n. 127, pp. 221-22 & 260-63.

The prevailing democracy, therefore, became a political luxury of the Indian upper strata.

The election of Vithalbhai Patel to the speakership of Legislative Assembly and his strictures passed against the Commander-in-Chief, W. Birdwood, for his arrogant absence from the Assembly in March 1928, did emotionally satiate the national and racial pride of Indians. The fact should, nevertheless, not be overlooked that the life of the Assembly itself depended on the goodwill of the colonial rulers. Though the parliamentary methods of obstruction which Parnell and his Irishmen had so brilliantly practised at Westminster, were executed with considerable success at New Delhi, they could serve only the limited interests of the nation.

The principle of self-determination which gained currency in the later stages of First World War, was sought to be applied in a partial way to India's demand for freedom. The Besant-Sapru-sponsored Commonwealth of India Bill, framed by a National Convention between 1921 and 1924, was the first attempt at spelling out, in accordance with needs and aspirations of Indian upper strata, the provisions of a full-fledged Dominion Constitution. Though its introduction in the House of Commons in 1926 by Mr. George Lansbury was of major significance, yet the technique employed by this legislation facilitated only the preparation a few years later of the Nehru (all parties) Report. Undoubtedly, it marked a definite step forward in outlining for the first time a federal structure for the entire country—provinces as well as princely states,—but all this was to be achieved in a framework of Dominion-Constitution. In this context, Pandit Motilal Nehru moved a proposal in the Central Legislative Assembly in 1924 of a Round Table Conference of representative Indians to draw up a Dominion Constitution for India. He made the point that Britain should follow the course she had adopted earlier in dealing with the draft of a constitution prepared by a convention of Australian representatives, namely, of endorsing the draft without any altera-

tions. The point needs no explanation to show the compromising attitude of the middle-class interests.

The most startling fact of Swarajist politics was that gradually the opportunistic elements of *bourgeois* and *petty bourgeois* origin who were nowhere visible during the grim days of independence struggle occupied positions of power in the party. Through their parliamentary sophistication they sabotage the original idea of using the Council chambers for purposes of exposure of and propaganda against Imperialist rulers. And in the name of the so-called policy of "responsive co-operation" they deserted the party to join the Government, formed their own separate groups. Such dissensions gradually assumed a communal colour. Wallowing in the mire of power they championed the sectional claims of this or that community. This proved fatal to the Swarajists at the time of third elections to the Councils. While at some places they fared badly, there was nothing short of disaster in the United Provinces where they got one seat. While giving a resume of the elections, Motilal Nehru wrote :

There has been a veritable rout of the Swarajists. "Defeat" is no word for it. But this was not because they were Swarajists, but because they were nationalists.... It was a fight between the forces of nationalism and those of a low order of communalism reinforced by wealth, wholesale corruption, terrorism and falsehood.<sup>164</sup>

To his son, Motilal Nehru wrote :

Publicly I was denounced as an anti-Hindu and pro-Mohammedan but privately almost every individual voter was told that I was a beef-eater in league with the Mohammedans to legalise cow-slaughter in public places at all times.... Communal hatred and heavy bribing of the voters was the order of the day.<sup>165</sup>

164. Cited by A. Pershad & Promila Suri, *Motilal Nehru* (Delhi, S. Chand & Co., 1961), p. 83.

165. Jawaharlal Nehru, *A Bunch of Old Letters* (Delhi, Asia Publishing House, 1958), pp. 49-50.

Swarajists were thus uprooted from the citadel of power by the social obscurantists.

### **Youth Movement**

As a result of contemporary political developments there was also awakening among the youth. By participating in the struggle for national emancipation, boycotting the institutions of education, organizing demonstrations, processions and meetings, they were growing eager day by day to share the burden of national responsibilities. The renunciation of personal desires overwhelmingly occupied their thinking. They appeared to be determined to carry on the creative task of national reconstruction with an abundant spirit of sincerity, unusual combination of idealism and purposefulness and love for self-immolation. They appeared to be conscious of the fact that seldom it was given to youth to bear the burden of such heavy national responsibility. There was to be no end to their duties. The more they shall give, the young intellectuals believed, of their life, the more ceaseless would be its prolonging because its existence was full to the brim. With these ideas the young intelligentsia appeared to be very adventurous. The uncertain future appeared to fascinate them. In this jealous enthusiasm they tried to ignore even their elders to whom they appeared nothing less than a "set of daredevil fanatics."<sup>166</sup> The sudden postponement of the political movement by Mahatmaji after the Chauri Chaura incident had left a disastrous impression upon their minds. A feeling of being betrayed by their own leader at the very moment when the adversary was at its weakest, had frustrated them.<sup>167</sup> It was in the midst of such disillusionment that they picked up the new ideas from abroad—ideas of militant anti-imperialism from Ireland and Egypt, of radical social and cultural changes from Turkey, and of socialism from Soviet Russia. There grew

166. Subhas Chandra Bose, *Dreams of a Youth* (Calcutta, 1928), p. 1.

167. Subhas Chandra Bose, *The Indian Struggle* (Asia Publishing House, 1964), p. 73 and Jawaharlal Nehru, *A Bunch of Old Letters*, n. 165, pp. 22-3.

up a strong desire in their circles to have a radical transformation in the politics of the Congress and a change of leadership, if possible. In close collaboration with the younger Nehru, K.F. Nariman, Shrimati Kamla Devi Chattopadhyaya and others Subhas Bose organised a radical wing within the Congress. In his inspiring writing, *Dreams of a Youth*, he laid down the life mission of young intelligentsia. He wrote :

We have come to this earth to fulfil some purpose, we have a message to give to the world. The sun rises in the sky to light up the whole universe, flowers blossom forth in order to sweeten the air with their fragrance, the stream rushes forward to offer its rich store of water to the sea. Likewise we have come to this earth with our joyful youth and full blooded life in order to establish some great truth. With single-minded devotion and practical experience of life we have got to discover that unknown and secret purpose of life which transforms an otherwise meaningless existence into a fruitful one. <sup>168</sup>

Deriving inspiration from the worldwide developments in the new era many new thoughts and ideals were hovering the minds of the youth, displaying justification for the growth of the nascent movement. They felt particularly tired of the slow moving constitutionalism of the leadership in the Congress. They appeared to believe that the needed change in the society could not be brought about softly, gradually, carefully, considerately, respectfully, politely, plainly and modestly. While some of them had been persistently demanding a militant anti-imperialist ideology to attain the national objectives, others, like Bhagat Singh and Chander Shekhar Azad, actually left the Congress and took part in terrorist activities. The perpetuation of alien domination appeared to be torturing and emasculating their natural process of growth, and they could not remain silent spectators to all this. In their respective

168. Subhas Chandra Bose, n. 166, p. 1.

provincial conferences their members had been passing resolutions recommending to the parent body of the Indian National Congress that the ultimate aim of the Indian people should unequivocally be defined as complete independence. The mistake committed by their forefathers in the eighteenth century in letting the foreign traders inside the country must be atoned for by them in the present century. Reflecting the sentiments of the young intelligentsia, Subhas Chandra Bose was writing in May 1923, only two years after the dropping of Hasrat Mohani's resolution on this very subject at the Ahmedabad Congress, that "the longing for freedom runs through our veins even from our infancy. The piteous cry we give out at the time of birth is nothing but a note of protest against worldly bonds.... Empires have come down to dust at one angry stamp of our foot."<sup>169</sup> In such circumstances, they believed, it was not their business to preach the message of peace. They rather felt interested in inciting revolt against old ideas, customs and political institutions and suffer privations, starvation and exile to Andamans. Politics became the very essence of their life. And their long-accumulated desire to struggle after the suspension of the *satyagraha* in 1922 found an outlet when the Simon Commission visited India. Students all over the country actively participated in the boycott of the Commission. The university and college authorities took disciplinary action against many of them. Some of them were also expelled from their respective educational institutions. The development of this new exigency impelled the students to establish their own organization in order to defend their interests. The first All Bengal Conference of Students was organized in August 1928 in Calcutta. A little later similar movements were started in other provinces as well. The defeat of the radical wing at the Calcutta Congress on the resolution of complete independence also led to the growth of dissatisfaction in youth with the outcome of the Congress Session. As a result of all

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169, *Ibid*, p. 5.



these political developments the youth held a number of conferences all over the country and placed before the young intellectuals an extremist programme. Subhas Bose, Jawaharlal Nehru, Srinivas Iyengar and T.L. Vaswani, who had been considered the leaders of the radical wing, were called upon to preside over these conferences. They were among the few public leaders who inspired the students to consolidate themselves, to curb the influence of communalist and loyalist intelligentsia and work for national regeneration like the youngmen who rallied round Mazzini and Garibaldi, De Valera and Terence McSwiney, Buddha and Shankracharya, Karl Marx and Lenin.<sup>170</sup>

While those *petty-bourgeois* leaders who exhorted the youth in the name of Italian and Irish national leaders, were just trying to harness the youth enthusiasm, power and gallancy to grind the axe of *bourgeois* nationalism, the other section of leaders exhorting the youth in the name of Karl Marx and Lenin, was trying to channelize their energies in the framework of class-consciousness.

### **Working Class and their Leaders**

Together with the growth of progressive youth movement, new classes and sections of society were making their debut in active public life, by propagating ideas of radical anti-imperialism. In a resolution passed at the session held on 12 March 1927, at Delhi, the All-India Trade Union Congress resolved to bring about the greatest possible solidarity and coordinated activity on the part of the trade unions throughout the British Empire in order to counteract the "ruthless exploitation carried on under the aegis of British Imperialism."<sup>171</sup> Deprecating the timely controversy of the trade unions' participation in the active politics Diwan Chaman Lal in a

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170. For further study see *Indian Quarterly Register*, July-December 1928, (Calcutta), Vol. II, p. 457.

171, *Indian Quarterly Register*, January-June 1927, Vol. I, p. 436,

speech delivered at the same session stated that politics could not be divorced from trade unionism and the Trade Union Congress should emphatically declare from its platform that it would "fight imperialism as it would fight capitalism".<sup>172</sup> This showed that the militant wing of the Trade Union Movement did not remain confined to its economic character. Its organizers had realized that the economic salvation of India in its existing political conditions was impracticable. In a resolution passed at its seventh session held on 13 March 1927 the Trade Union Congress protested against the action of the British Government for sending Indian troops to China "to further the aims of imperialism".<sup>173</sup>

In alliance with the new emerging left-wing inside the National Congress under the leadership of Jawaharlal Nehru, Srinivas Iyengar, Satya Murti and Subhas Bose, the working class leaders and Communists made the first organized attempt at the Madras session of the Congress in December 1927 to influence the decisions of the Congress. Indeed it was from this Congress that the all-India leadership of Communists and Workers' and Peasants' parties made themselves felt on an all-India plane. Communists like Dange, Muzaffar Ahmad, Ghate K.N. Joglekar, R.S. Nimbakar, Philip Spratt, etc. attended the session and worked in a concerted manner. The Workers' and Peasants' Party, Bengal, addressed a Manifesto to this Congress, signed by the Bengal Communist leader Muzaffar Ahmad. The widely circulated Manifesto demanded boycott of Simon Commission on principle, a national constituent assembly, universal adult suffrage, complete independence, mass action in the form of general strikes and non-payment of taxes, land to the peasant, bread for the toiler and education for all.<sup>174</sup>

172. *Ibid.*

173. *Ibid.*, p. 441. For Soviet assessment see Zafar Imam, n. 127, pp. 263-65.

174 *The Manifesto of the W. & P.P. to the Indian National Congress, Madras, December 1927.* See also Muzaffar Ahmad, n. 109, pp. 467 & 492-510,

The Manifesto was critical of the Congress which, according to the Manifesto, was under the influence of the *bourgeoisie*. It maintained : "The programme of *bourgeois* nationalism (defence of the interests of the landowning and capitalist classes) has failed to stir the enthusiasm of the Nation.... The National Congress must be liberated from the influence of their spokesman.... The National Congress if it wishes to conduct the struggle for national freedom, must become the party of the people."<sup>175</sup>

In the absence of Mahatma Gandhi at the Congress and in lack of opposition from the Right due to indifference, the leftists succeeded in getting adopted a unanimous resolution on complete independence (*Poorna Swaraj*) as aim of the national movement. Other resolutions of this Congress that bore the impact of leftist influence were the boycott of the Simon Commission, the affiliation of the National Congress to the League against Imperialism, expression of solidarity with the Chinese in their fight for freedom.

The visit of Shapurji Saklatwala, the renowned Comrade "sak" and also a member of British Parliament, to this country in 1927 was another interesting development in Indian politics particularly in context with the relationship between Gandhiji and Communists in that period. Although the correspondence exchanged between the two leading personalities was related to labour problems, yet it was also politically important. Saklatwala wrote to Gandhiji in his own characteristic manner. In the most comprehensive part of his correspondence he states :

Let me say in my usual blunt way that I am returning to my "attack" upon you. Of course, you understand the meaning and nature of my "attacks" upon you, namely, that recognising in you a man of indomitable spirit, with a real propagandist's heart and qualities, I want you to deal with the various Indian movements in the way in which

success is made for such movements in other parts of the world.<sup>176</sup>

The correspondence then moves on to explain why the growth of modern industry in India was inevitable; how that served as the most powerful element for unifying the workers and overpassing their division based on caste and religion; how the Indian proletariat had a great role to play in independence movement despite its numerically meagre strength, how Mahatmaji's Ahmadabad Majur Mahajan was not based on real trade-union principles; how his theories about "the due share of labour" were reactionary; etc., and makes powerful appeal to Gandhiji to affiliate his labour organization to the AITUC and join his forces with the broad stream of the Indian trade-union movement.<sup>177</sup>

And then again, Saklatwala pays a glowing tribute to Gandhiji's crusading and organizing capacities :

Despite your failing health you are an active and all-India propagandist capable of covering enormous areas in a short time. Your popularity and charm enable you to capture the mass psychology and would render easier otherwise the stupendous task of organising an illiterate, overawed and semi-starved population of millions; your inspiring co-operation would give zest to the other voluntary workers in labour's cause; and I may even frankly say that your own new activity would give a suitable opening for practical work to the thousands of our youth who once enlisted in your movement and then cooled down in the absence of practical and convincing programme.<sup>178</sup>

Gandhiji's replies, although quite briefer, are of much interest. In a letter he remarked :

176. Cited by S. G. Sardesai, "Gandhi and the CPI", n. 54, p. 22,

177. *Ibid*, pp. 22-3.

178. *Ibid*, p. 23,

So far as our ideals are concerned, we stand apart.... One word as to (my) policy. It is not anti-capitalistic. The idea is to take from capital labour's due share and no more, and this not by paralysing capital, but reform among labourers from within and by their own self-consciousness and not manoeuvring of nonlabour leaders, but by educating labour to evolve its own leadership and its own self-reliant, self-existing organisation. Its direct aim is internal reform and evolution of internal strength; the indirect result of this evolution, when, if ever it became complete, will naturally be tremendous politically.

...Labour in my opinion, must not become a pawn in the hands of politician on the political chess board. It must, by its sheer strength, dominate the chess board.... This is my dream .... I regard you as a fellow seeker after truth .... It is not given to all of us to agree with one another in all our opinions; but it is given to every one of us to tender the same respect for the opinions and actions of our fellows as we expect for our own.<sup>179</sup>

### Capitalist Class

A noteworthy development of this period was that beside the sharpening of the conflict between the Indian *bourgeoisie* and the working class there also deepened the contradiction and antagonism between British financial interests and the Indian national *bourgeoisie*. The predominance of the former in Indian trade and business had led to an impression in the mind of the latter that the whole business atmosphere was "surcharged with a gloomy feeling and characterized by an outlook of depression."<sup>180</sup> If these unfavourable circumstances continued

179. *Ibid.*

180. Comment by G D. Birla in the fourth session of the Indian Industrial and Commercial Congress held at Calcutta on 31 December 1926. [*Indian Quarterly Register*, July-December 1926 (Calcutta), Vol. II, p. 423].

(footnote contd.)

to perpetuate, Mr. Birla complained in his speech delivered at the fourth session of the Indian Industrial and Commercial Congress held on 31 December 1926, "the cup of India's economic misery will become full to the brim."<sup>181</sup> He further stated, "It is better that we took the time by the forelock and set about devising ways and means to fight the menace, which like the Democle's sword is hanging over your head."<sup>182</sup>

Further, the association of Government and its members with the important functions of the commercial organizations predominantly controlled by the foreign businessmen like the Associated Chambers, the Bengal Chamber of Commerce and the European Association created the impression in the Indian

(previous footnote contd.)

It may be recalled that at about this time there appeared R. Palme Dutt's book *Modern India*. He had originated the theory that imperialism after the First World War was preparing to enter on a new stage of intensified exploitation and domination of India through a measure of industrialization, as outlined in the Industrial Commission's Report, together with a corresponding political alliance with the Indian *bourgeoisie* as a junior partner, expressed in the system of dyarchy. This theory was incorrect so far as it assumed the possibility of a measure of industrialization under imperialism. It was this theory which was subsequently developed and distorted by M. N. Roy into his fantastic theory of de-colonisation, i.e. that imperialism voluntarily renounces power. This ultra-utopian theory, along with heavy criticism of his policy and actions in China, his exaggerated reports about the strength of Communists in India and British Imperialist conspiracy to denounce him at the Comintern through their Communist agent Masood Ali Shah led to Roy's expulsion from the Communist International later on in 1929.

[See the letters written by Dutt brothers to Muzaffar Ahmad in April 1960; *Myself and the Communist Party of India* (Calcutta, National Book Agency, 1972), pp. 478-81 and 490. For further study see also Sankar Ghose, *Socialism and Communism in India* (Allied Publishers, 1971), pp. 155-58].

181. *Indian Quarterly Register*, (Calcutta), 1926, Vol. II, p. 424.

182. *Ibid.*

mercantile community that it was not the Government of India but these commercial organizations that ruled the country.

Such an urgent situation impelled the Indian merchants to appoint a committee to draft the constitution of an all-India commercial body primarily controlled by them. This committee submitted to the conference of Indian merchants held in 1926 a constitution of the new commercial body, named as the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce. In his presidential speech at the same conference Sir Dinshaw Petit pledged that the dependent position of political and economic life in India made it necessary for the Indian commercial and industrial organizations to "stand shoulder to shoulder to fight" against policies for exploiting the country.<sup>183</sup>

To strengthen their campaign of industrial and commercial progress the Indian *bourgeoisie* started associating itself with the deliberations of the Indian National Congress. In his presidential address delivered at the second annual meeting of the India Chambers of Commerce held in December 1928, Sir Purshottam Das Thakurdas stated, "The Indian commerce and industry are intimately associated with, and are, indeed, an integral part of the national movement—growing with its growth and strengthening with its strength....The ideal of the national movement in the political sphere, namely to make the Indian nation united, prosperous and progressive, is also the ideal of Indian commerce and industry in the economic sphere."<sup>184</sup>

Historically it is the task of the *bourgeois-nationalist* revolution to achieve the independence of the country from foreign control. The Indian *bourgeoisie* was also ready to accomplish it because of its alienation from British capital in Indian industry, the dependence of Indian merchant capital on export and import which was largely concerned with British

183. *Ibid*, p. 425.

184. *Ibid*, July-December 1928 (Calcutta), Vol. II. p. 494.

goods or was controlled by British interests. Besides, a section of Indian *bourgeoisie* which had been penalized by the recent alteration of the exchange ratio of sterling and had become discontented, was also ready to support and lead the national liberation movement. But it was also ready to compromise on the issue of Dominion Status. It was not ready to move to the extent of the demand for complete independence. It may be recalled that prior to the 1928 Congress session at Calcutta, young intellectuals like Jawaharlal Nehru left no stone unturned to persuade the elder leadership of the Congress to vote for complete independence. They did not succeed. Relating one such attempt of younger Nehru made at the winter meeting of the Congress Working Committee at Delhi in 1928 one of his journalist colleagues, J.N. Sahni, writes in his memoirs that when they enquired from him of the results of his mission Jawaharlal confessed, "Frankly there was no response. It was like talking to a group of old *purdah nashin* (veiled) women!"<sup>185</sup>

### **The Tussle**

The tussle over the issue of complete independence between the older leaders and left-wingers was also reflected at the 1928 Calcutta Session of the Congress. Although Gandhiji could carry a majority of delegates behind his compromise resolution of one year's grace by securing 1350 votes, the very fact that no less than 973 votes were secured by the left-wingers against waiting for another year, displayed the intensive impatience with the formula of Dominion Status and negotiations. The colonial authorities, however, were not ready to oblige the Rightist leadership of the Congress by conceding their demand. They were not prepared to go beyond provincial autonomy, and that too with all the possible limitations that could be

185. J.N. Sahni, "Jawaharlal as I knew Him" *The Hindustan Times* (New Delhi), 14 June 1964; For further study see also E.M.S. Namboodiripad, *The Mahatma and the Ism* (People's Publishing House, 1958), pp. 47-8.



guaranteed for such minority “*interests*” as the Europeans, feudal lords, etc. The Rightist leaders, however, were still determined. In an article written a few weeks before the Lahore Congress Gandhiji said :

I can wait for the dominion status constitution, if I can get the real dominion status in action; if today there is a real change of heart, a real desire on the part of the British people to see India a free and a self-respecting nation and on the part of the officials in India a true spirit of service.... *My conception of dominion status implies present ability to sever the British connection if I wish to.*<sup>186</sup>

Up to the last moment before the Lahore Congress, a final effort was made to find some basis of agreement between the Congress and the colonial rulers. It looks that even Jawaharlal Nehru was persuaded for the time being to echo the sentiments of Rightist leadership when he also signed the joint manifesto on 1 November 1929 welcoming the Viceroy's declaration on Dominion Status. However, it was the good luck of young radicals who cherished for Complete Independence that a storm broke out in England over the Viceroy's declaration. The circumstances compelled the Labour Government to undertone in England what Lord Irwin was trying to boost in this country. How could it be possible to synchronize the contradictions of British Imperialism and to devise a formula that could pass for self-government in India, and for Imperialist *Raj* at Westminster.

The young radicals, on the other hand, uncompromisely organized propaganda all the time against the compromising policies of the Congress leaders. The HSRA in a manifesto distributed in Lahore Congress gave a warning : “The leaning of certain politicians in favour of Dominion Status shows

186. D.G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma* (Bombay, 1951), Vol. II, p. 502. Italics added.

clearly which way the wind blows. Indian capital is preparing to betray the masses into the hands of Foreign Capitalism and receive as a price of this betrayal, a little share in the government of the country.”<sup>187</sup>

On the other hand, the Leftist Congressmen also founded Independence for India League which, though short in life, worked incessantly for *Poorna Swaraj*.

Gradually all winds had begun to flow for complete independence. The prospect of revolutionary changes did not frighten young radical-leftists like Jawaharlal Nehru; on the contrary, it seemed to uplift them. “We appear to be in a dissolving period of history”, said he in his Presidential Address at Lahore session in 1929, “when the world is in labour and out of her travail will give birth to a new order.” This was not sheer rhetoric. Everybody could watch his impatience over half-measures, compromises, vague generalities. Echoing the voice of the new social order he proclaimed :

I must frankly confess that I am a socialist and a republican and am no believer in kings and princes or in the order which produces the modern kings of industry, who have greater power over the lives and fortunes of men than even kings of old, and whose methods are predatory as those of old feudal aristocracy.<sup>188</sup>

The central problem, he emphasized, was the conquest of power : “the total withdrawal of the army of occupation and British economic control from India.” He challenged the prerogative of British Parliament to decide the measure and manner of India’s advancement. India was “a nation on the march”,

187, Cited by a member of the Central Committee of HSRA, Bejoy Kumar Sinha, “Bhagat Singh & HSRA Heard the Call of October Revolution”, *New Age*(New Delhi), 5 Nov., 1967, Vol. XV, No. 45, p. 93.

188. *Congress Presidential Addresses*, (Madras, G. A. Natesan & Co, 1934), p. 894.

which no one could hinder. "If we fail today", he added, "and tomorrow brings no success, the day after tomorrow will bring achievements."<sup>189</sup>

As one looks at these fiery utterances in print in our times, it is hard to comprehend the impact they exercised more than forty years ago, when they were poured like burning chemicals on Rightist Indian politicians and arrogant British bureaucrats. The three-pronged invasion on imperialism, capitalism and feudalism was measured to annoy immediately officials and monopoly capitalists, feudal lords and Maharajas to whom Pt. Nehru must have appeared a dare-devil socialist or a romantic idealist. His economic programme was no less radical than his politics. He told the Lahore session :

Our economic programme must be based on a human outlook, and must not sacrifice men to money. If any industry could not be run without starving its workers, then the industry must be closed down. If the workers on the land have not enough to eat, then the intermediaries who deprive them of their full share must go. The philosophy of socialism has permeated the entire structure of society the world over....India will have to end her poverty and inequality."<sup>190</sup>

### Zamindars

The attitude of the landlords, who were conservative forces inconvertible with public affairs and were backward in knowledge of the nationalist movement, is determined by their class composition. From its early beginnings the nationalist movement had been the movement of the Indian upper classes against the imperialist rulers. It had been the movement sponsored and supported by the class of Indian capitalists,

189. *Ibid*, pp. 897-98.

190. *Ibid*, pp. 894-96. For Soviet assessment see Zafar Imam, n. 127, pp. 199-255.

zamindars and middle class intellectuals. No doubt the nationalist movement had represented a more or less progressive section of these classes. But, no sooner the nationalist movement acquired a mass character manifesting the demands of the exploited working class and peasantry, the landlords did not consider it safe to support it. Wedded to retrospective habits of thought as they were, they, with minor exceptions, switched their loyalties in full to the Imperialist Government without whose support they could no longer survive. With the support of retired Indian officers the local *zaildars* organized *aman sabhas*, or *Ghulam Sabhas* to counter the influence of the Congress and *Kisan Sabhas*. Their purpose was to carry on propaganda in the villages in favour of British rule. Their business was to frighten people with *lathis* to coerce and thus make them into members.<sup>191</sup> Besides, some *taluqdars* also sponsored the so-called *Kisan Hitkarini Sabhas* whose object was to persuade the peasants not to agitate and to await minor reforms effected by the landlords.<sup>192</sup>

During Mass Civil Disobedience the *Zamindars* in the Punjab made every effort to disapprove of militant speeches and to repel attacks upon Government.<sup>193</sup> On 10 September 1928 when the Home Member Mr. Crerar, moved in Legislative Assembly the Public Safety (Removal from India) Bill to exterminate the revolutionary forces, Suhrawardy, the landed aristocrat, was in complete accord with the motion of the Home Member. On it being pointed out by a nationalist Member Ranga Iyer, that India need not be afraid of revolutionary movement as there had been no revolution there for the last 3000 years, Suhrawardy said in full sarcasm :

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191. *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, n. 39, pp. 183-84.

192. *Ibid*, p. 207.

193. *Report on the Political Situation in the Punjab for the fortnight ending on 15th of December 1921*; Home (Political) Department, Government of India. File No. 155/1922 n. 66.

*I entirely agree with that, it is quite true. The benevolent despots of 3000 years ago would not come before an Assembly representative or unrepresentative and beg for power to deport undesirable aliens. They knew how to deal with them and to give them the short, shrift and extirpet communism in thought and theory, root and branch, as they did with Buddhism in India and Mazadakism in Persia. They would never resort to the method adopted by the Hon'ble Home Member. They knew of a swifter, shorter and cheaper method. They would have caught hold of them and cast them in grass sacks into the lakes of Kashmir or into the Indian Ocean to drown like puppies and pariah dogs. No wonder there had been no revolution in India.<sup>194</sup>*

Another feudal lord, Hira Singh, also lent his whole-hearted support to the Bill. In his opinion the Bill only sought to "kill those nasty germs" which were expected to spread among those poor classes, whose trouble and pain was not felt by many (nationalist) Members in the House and if that poison was allowed to spread among those agricultural classes and the cultivators and in the classes from which the Army was drawn, the peace of India would be in great danger.<sup>195</sup>

### Princes

But above all there were the princely states<sup>196</sup> which constituted an anomaly of Indian political life. They were the feudal remnants of a bygone era. As they were scattered all over the country, they were considered an effective hindrance to an achievement of national unity. They might be characterized

194. *Legislative Assembly Debates*, Vol. III (1928), p. 766.

195. *Ibid*, 627.

196. For detailed study of the characteristics of these States see Kanhaya Lal Gauba, *His Highness* (Lahore, 1938); V.P. Menon, *The Story of the Integration of the Indian States* (Madras, 1956); *Modern Review* (Calcutta, 1928).

as a brake on national progress. Due to their despotic character most of the rulers of these States rarely showed an inclination to respect the rights of their subjects. They considered it was their prerogative to rule over them. They had unabated control over legislation. The Administration of the State was above public criticism. It was based on the pithy sayings about autocracy, "I am the State" and "the King can do no wrong". There was much extravagance<sup>197</sup> in the private life of this anachronistic group of princes who, according to a calculation of the American weekly magazine *Time* had on an average "11 titles, 5.8 wives besides the innumerable concubines, 12.6 children and 3.4 Rolls Royces."<sup>198</sup> The foreign writers who visited India recently were while horrified to see the poverty-stricken and downtrodden people of India, they were flabbergasted to see the princes' jewels, famous diamonds, pearl necklaces, luxurious palaces, crowns and jewelled elephants and other paraphernalia. The remembrance for the Maharajas made them write that they were miracles like the miracle of nuclear energy and inter-planetary exploits. In his book *Maharaja* Diwan Jarmani Dass gives 'vivid accounts of how to get honours, salutes and floral decorations, the rulers had to fall at the feet of the British government, while they themselves were autocratic and tyrannical to their own subjects.<sup>199</sup>

How childish the princes were over acquiring superior decorations in comparison to their counter-parts has also been illustrated by Diwan Jarmani Dass by citing the reference of two petty *Mirs* of Hunza and Nagar, now incorporated in West Pakistan. The author writes that on the recommendation

197. For further study see Diwan Jarmani Dass, *Maharaja : Lives and loves and intrigues of Indian princes* (Allied Publishers, 1969), pp. 20, 71-79, 98 and 117. See also Diwan J. Dass & Rakesh Bhan Dass, *Maharani* (S. Chand & Co, 1972).

198. Remarks quoted by *The Hindu* (Madras), 26 January 1947, p. 5, col. 6.

199. Diwan Jarmani Dass, n. 197, pp. 224-25,

of the Resident and the Viceroy of India the British Emperor bestowed upon the *Mir* of Hunza, the exalted title of KCIE in 1921, while the same Emperor conferred upon the *Mir* of Nagar on 1 January 1923, the honour of KBE. KCIE means Knight Commander of the Indian Empire while KBE means Knight of the order of the British Empire. Both these rulers were anxious to know which of the two titles was superior and each of them complained and fretted that the other ruler got better and higher title. On account of this obsession, the jealousy between the two rulers grew and they became more and more hostile to each other. At last the Indian Governor of Gilgit had to befool both of them separately and pacify them by telling one that his title was superior because it contained four letters while the other one contained only three. When the other *Mir* with an honour of three words reached him, he pacified him by telling that his rival had only an Indian title while the Emperor conferred upon him the highest British title and told him in all seriousness that the British titles were superior to the Indian titles. Both the rulers celebrated their respective superiority by spending extravagantly in their capitals and by lavishly throwing gold and silver coins and ornaments to the public from the balcony of their palaces.<sup>200</sup>

### Viceroy-Watcher Tells Tales

The princes also wasted their time by remaining pre-occupied with strange kind of orgies. Here is an account rendered by a close observer of those days. Sitting beneath a shady tree near a dustbin behind a Government quarter in New Delhi, is an old man who had had close glimpses of the British rule in India, from the Viceregal Lodge—later Rashtrapati Bhawan.

In the Delhi Durbar, Rajas from all States accepted the invitation except the Maharaja of Udaipur, who vowed to

<sup>200</sup>. *Ibid*, pp. 117-18.

reduce the metropolitan city of Delhi to ashes before putting his foot on it so as to avenge the abduction of a Rajput princess by Muslims from marriage procession.

Lord Hardinge was very much perturbed. To avoid a military conflict and to fulfil the Maharaja's pledge he ordered the construction of a gigantic paper model of Delhi to the minutest details of even windows and latches in the Tis Hazari complex. When the work was completed the Maharaja of Udaipur in the presence of Lord Hardinge and all the other Rajas burnt the model of Delhi amidst cheers and loud applause of "Dilli jal gayee, Dilli jal gayee." It was only after this that the Maharaja of Udaipur attended the Durbar. Sukhmandan Singh who stood beside the Viceroy was a spectator to everything.<sup>201</sup>

Perhaps no other class of the Indian people was so adamant on repeatedly expressing its loyalty to the British domination than the Indian princes. A number of evidences can be cited in support of this approach. Due to the despotic character of their regimes in their States and unfettered extravagance in spending the finances they could only safely rely on the British Crown for the perpetuation of their rule. Supporting a resolution in an annual meeting of the Chamber of Princes held in 1929 the Maharaja of Patiala expressed his deep concern over the demand of complete severance of the British connection advocated by the advanced political sections in British India. Such an exigency, he emphasized, would create an "insurmountable obstacle" in the way of closer relations between British India and "Indian India". It would also be inconsistent with the due discharge of their mutual treaty obligations with the British Crown. Like many of his colleagues

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201. "Viceroy-Watcher Sukhmandan Singh tells tales from his Jhuggi", *Evening News : Hindustan Times* (New Delhi), 5 September 1972, p. 5, col. 2,



he was profoundly convinced on the issue of maintaining the British connection. He added, "India will be a greater and more prosperous land...within the Empire." Any movement in favour of complete independence was likely to injure the best interests of the country and also to postpone the establishment of equitable and friendly adjustments of interests.<sup>202</sup> Supporting the same resolution, the Maharaja of Kapurthala stated emphatically: "No greater disservice can be rendered to the cause of India than this policy and doctrine of independence. India cannot do without England. Her goodwill and assistance are needed not only to attain freedom, but to maintain it."<sup>203</sup> In the same session the Maharaja of Kashmir emphasized that autonomous Indian States would find great opportunity of mutual service under the "common aegis of the British Crown."<sup>204</sup>

"It is my definite opinion that", writes Jarmani Dass, a minister in the former princely State of Patiala, "the ruling princes did not make any sacrifice for the independence of India. Fear of annihilation and the remembrance of the history of the Tzar of Russia, King Louis XVI of France...drove them to integrate their States with India."<sup>205</sup>

Actually, the rulers in league with British bureaucrats were always ready to wreck any scheme which will guarantee the freedom of this country. On the other hand, they were bitterly antagonistic to the nationalist forces. For instance, a ruler of a former princely State in Madhya Pradesh had the mania of removing Gandhi caps from the heads of Congressmen gathered at the Gwalior railway station to catch trains. He was happy if he snatched one hundred caps a day.<sup>206</sup> But some-

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202. *Indian Quarterly Register*, January-June 1929 (Calcutta), Vol. I, p. 78.

203. *Ib'd*, p.481.

204, *Ibid*, p. 479.

205. Diwan Jarmani Dass, n. 197, p. 263.

206, *Ibid*,

times he also used to play the role of a patriot, as our account will subsequently show.

Gradually the people in the States had become politically conscious and resented the unpatriotic attitude of the princes. The popular developments taking place all over the country as well as in Europe were affecting their political thinking. They had begun to clamour for a legitimate recognition of their rights and privileges. They might be respectful to the princes but they were more disposed to demand their legitimate rights and less willing to yield to the autocratic decisions blindly. They demanded that if limited monarchy was good enough for Great Britain, it should be equally good enough for the people of these States also. If even this was denied the people would be forced to adopt militant measures for the fulfilment of their aspirations. Presiding over the third session of the All-India States Subjects Conference held on 29 December, 1925, Mr. Shanker Lal Kaul stated, "By behaving like little Czars they (princes) would become fathers of Bolshevism in India."<sup>207</sup> A few years earlier in 1919 Lala Lajpat Rai had also emphasized that no amount of ancient prestige could prevent the people from coming into their own. The age of despotism was gone and the autocrats of the day must sooner or later transfer their powers to the people. As "autocratic dispensers of favours and fortunes" they could not continue.<sup>208</sup>

However, it may be incorrect to generalize that all the princes were totally of the despotic and unpatriotic nature. There were exceptions like the Maharaja Ganga Singh of Bikaner, who acted like benevolent despots by introducing some economic and political reforms in their respective States. Moreover, certain other princes were in favour of advent of inde-

207. *Ibid*, July-December 1925, Vol. II, p. 374.

208. Lajpat Rai, *The Political Future of India* (New York, 1919), p. 106.

pendence to India. Nonetheless, bound by treaty obligations *they were precluded from expressing openly their support for the liberation of India.* One such exception is the case of Madhavrao Scindia of Gwalior. In a strictly confidential meeting with M.R. Jayakar in June 1920 the Maharaja asked him, "Have you considered the question as to what would happen if the British were to leave India some day?" On his replying that the British would not leave India of their own accord the Scindia assured him of British departure some time in the future under insistent public pressure. But what would the Indian public leaders do then? On the reply of Jayakar that he had also not considered this problem because the possibility seemed to be very remote the Maharaja replied, "I have considered the question and I can assure you that if that event happens and there is commotion in the country I can do this" and pointing to Sharanpur in the map he said, "One foot in Saharanpur and the other in Poona. The territory between these two terminuses, I shall keep safe for the benefit of our Government."<sup>209</sup>

Besides, the forces released by the First World War did not leave the princely States unaffected. The possibility of a swifter advance under the Montagu-Chelmsford scheme to responsible government at the Centre than that implicit in the 1917 declaration compelled the princes to organise themselves for the safeguarding of their needs and interests. Lord Reading's letter in 1924 to the Nizam of Hyderabad claiming for the Paramount Power the unilateral right to interpret treaty rights and obligations had an unsettling effect on the princes. Later, the cardinal principle enunciated by the Butler Committee in 1928 that "paramountcy must remain paramount" created a sense of urgency among the princes for collective deliberations and actions.

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209. M.R. Jayakar. *The Story of My Life* (Bombay, 1958) Vol. I, p. 379.

## C—YOUNG REVOLUTIONARIES

*The youth of the country is standing on the threshold of a revolution in order to cast off the shackles of mental slavery and communal traditionalism. He is heading towards the philosophy of revolution. This tendency in him is igniting the fire of hatred and struggle against foreign domination. He wants the tyrant and the exploiter to be burnt to ashes. The revolt of the youth against exploitation and injustice is taking the shape of terrorism. Terrorism is only the first step of a people's revolution.... The history of all the revolutions in the world has gone this way. Terrorism creates awe in the heart of the exploiting tyrant and through a policy of revenge brings self-confidence, courage and optimism to the oppressed and suffering masses.... The struggles launched by the suffering and oppressed peoples all over the world, for their emancipation, serve guides to the path of revolutionary. By the continuous and incessant struggles the oppressed have always overpowered and overthrown the oppressors. Indian revolutionaries also will inevitably be successful in their mission.*

*[An extract from "The Philosophy of Bomb" issued by HSPRS, Yash Pal, Simhavalokan (Lucknow, Viprav Karyalaya, 1952), Vol. II, p. 144].*

### **Introduction**

During the days of Non-Co-operation the young revolutionaries had failed to stir up an armed uprising despite their best

endeavours to secure the active sympathy and co-operation of foreign countries, especially those which were hostile to Britain. Moreover, their movements had also got a setback from Gandhiji's new movement of non-violence. On his advice some of them had suspended their activities. In 1920, when some of them, especially of Bengal, came out of their detention, gathered round C. R. Das. He also appealed to them to give the Gandhian movement a trial and join the Congress for that motive. The *Jugantar* revolutionaries agreed to work for the Congress in deference to Deshbandhu's appeal.

It may, however, be recalled that the revolutionary movement was not totally abandoned during the days of non-co-operation. There were still some groups active in disguise. One such group was organized by Yogesh Chander Chatterji and others of *Anushilan Samiti*. It was named *Bharat Seva Sangh*.<sup>1</sup> A weekly paper *Shankha* was started. There also came into existence a printing press named "The Culcutta Printing Works". The organizers of the *Sangh* were critical of the Non-Co-operation Movement as is evident from a leaflet *Hak-Katha*, circulated by them. But they were secretly planning for an armed revolution. To camouflage their secret activities, the members opened night schools, worked for village development and organized the health improvement campaigns.

Meanwhile, Sachindra Nath Sanyal, along with other comrades like Damodar Swaroop Seth and Suresh Chandra Bhattacharya, were released on general amnesty on 20 February 1920 after completing some part of their sentences for participating in Banaras "Conspiracy". Although others jumped into Non-Co-operation, but Sanyal did not; he planned to organize revolution. Directed by the Bengal *Anushilan Samiti* another organization was also opened in the mean time at Banaras as

1. Jogesh Chandra Chatterji, *In Search of Freedom* (Calcutta, 1967), p. 159,

*Kalyaan Ashram* which also started working secretly for armed revolution. As this body and Sanyal group had the same object, the revolutionary groups merged together after some time.

Those who sided with the Congress made its volunteer corps in Bengal a powerful force by drilling them regularly. They also enriched the organization financially by collecting money for it through armed means. According to a confidential report of the Chief Secretary to Bengal Government, by June 1922 eight District Congress Committees were reported to be under the control of revolutionaries, and in November it was found that the Provincial Congress Committee contained a large proportion of ex-detenus and ex-State prisoners. They tried to impart to the organization the Bolshevik ideology.<sup>2</sup>

The situation, however, took a turn on the suspension of the Non-Co-operation after the Chauri Chaura incident. The revolutionaries with the Congress as well as outside were taken aback. They again actively revived their violent movement. They argued that in the course of the Non-Co-operation Movement Mahatma Gandhi had raised the slogan : "Education may wait, but *swaraj* cannot". Therefore the youngmen came forward, joined the movement and accelerated its advance. But when the movement was suddenly suspended how could they remain indifferent to the attainment of *swaraj*. Although disgusted, some of them rejoined colleges; some went to government service and other vocations; but the dare-devils among them were not to sit silently with folded hands. They searched for new avenues and easily became recruits to the revolutionary movement, no sooner they came in touch with the clandestine societies. And once more they began to think that their national goal could be reached only by following the techniques of Sinn Feinists in Ireland and the Nihilists in Russia. One of them, Sachindra Nath Sanyal, wrote to Gandhiji on 12 February 1925 :

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2. Home (Pol.) Dept., Govt. of India, File No. 195/1925, p. 84.

They have now decided to remain silent no more....Now the experiment (of Non-Co-operation) is over and therefore the revolutionaries are free from their promise.<sup>3</sup>

### Attempts of Reorganizing

Influenced by a saying of Voltaire : "It is the penny pamphlets reaching poorest cottage dwellers that are to be reckoned with" the revolutionaries started publishing small leaflets. One of them bore the name *The Revolutionary : An Organ of the Revolutionary Party of India*. It bore the date as 1 January 1925. It was circulated secretly by post and by hand between 28 and 31 January 1925 all over the country, especially in big cities like Rangoon, Calcutta, Bombay, Lahore, Amritsar, Peshawar, Kanpur, Lucknow, Banaras, Allahabad and other important places on a very large scale. At least 360 copies were received in eighteen districts in the then United Provinces and handed over to or recovered by the officials. The recipients were for the most part teachers and boys in schools and colleges. This proved the existence of a political body active in North-eastern India. The event was of great significance.

Normally a person is an ordinary human being, but under abnormal circumstances at times he can show wonders. This takes place when he is inspired. The potential energy in him becomes kinetic. He is aroused and awakened from long slumber. He kicks and jumps and works with great enthusiasm. The new four-page leaflet was the result of this enthusiasm. It began with the following typically vigorous style :

Chaos is necessary for the birth of a new star and the birth of life is accompanied by agony and pain. India is also taking a new birth, and is passing through that inevi-

3. *Young India 1924-26*, a collection of writings (Madras, Ganesh & Co., 1929), p. 901. See also the opening paragraph of the manifesto issued in 1929 by *Naujawan Bharat Sabha*. Full text has recently appeared in *Yuvakranti* (Delhi), July 1972, p. 7.

table phase, when chaos and agony shall play their destined role, when all calculations shall prove futile, when the wise and the mighty shall be bewildered by the simple and the weak, when great empire shall crumble down and new nation shall arise and surprise humanity with the splendour and glory which shall be all its own.<sup>4</sup>

In continuation it was stated that a new power had come into existence in India, that power being the revolutionary movement amongst young men, which in spite of all opposition would eventually triumph. This movement had withstood repression for two decades. It was now stronger than ever before, and its prospects were brighter. The writer then proceeded to justify the movement on the ground that India was ruled without justification by foreigners whose authority rested on domination by the sword. The sword of these foreigners was to be met by the sword of the Indians.

The writer then proceeded to declare that the immediate object of the revolutionary party was to establish a republican form of government in India by an organized and armed uprising. The new republic would control all the means of manufactures and the shipping industry. The legislature would control the executive. The aims of the revolutionary party were stated to be international rather than national. There would be equal rights for all communities, general co-operation and a "spiritual recognition" of the realities of life.

The writer continued that the time was not ripe for the disclosure of the policy and the programme of the party. The party reserves to itself freedom to associate or not to associate with the Indian Congress. Then followed the words : "But this

4. The writer of this leaflet is supposed to be Sachindra Nath Sanyal. The excerpts of statement have been inserted by an old revolutionary and friend of Sanyal, Jogesh Chandra Chatterji, *In Search of Freedom*, n. 1, p. 346.



party views all constitutional agitation in the country with contempt and ridicule.”<sup>5</sup> After some amplification of the idea there appeared the following passage :

Young Indian! Shake off illusion, face realities with a stout heart, and do not avoid struggles, difficulties and sacrifices. The inevitable is to come. Do not be misguided any more. Peace and tranquillity you cannot have and India's liberty can never be achieved through peaceful and legal means. The following memorable words of a great English author, Mr. Robertson, may serve to make the wise men of India wiser still :

The movement and programme of reform was mainly the achievement of Irish and Protestant leaders to whom British statesmen had revealed the fatal secret that “England could be bullied but not argued into justice and generosity” (*England Under the Hanoverians*, p. 197). “Indian leaders are still ignorant of this fatal secret or else they are foolishly wise to ignore it.”<sup>6</sup>

The writer then proceeds to dispute the accuracy of the view that Indians were unable to drive the British out of India by force of arms.<sup>7</sup> The pamphlet concluded as follows :

A few words more about terrorism and anarchism. These two words are playing the most mischievous part in India today. They are being invariably misapplied whenever any reference to the revolutionaries is to be made because it is so very convenient to denounce the revolutionaries under that name. The Indian revolutionaries are neither terrorists nor anarchists. They never aim at spreading anarchy in the land, and therefore, they can never properly be called

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5. Jogesh Chandra Chatterji, n. 1, p. 347.

6. *Ibid*, p. 348.

7. *Ibid*.

“anarchists”. Terrorism is never their object and they can not be called “terrorists”. They do not believe that terrorism is for terrorism’s sake, although they may at times resort to this method as a very effective means of retaliation. The present government exists solely because the foreigners have successfully been able to terrorise the Indian people. The Indian people do not love their English masters, they do not want them to be here : but they do help the Britishers simply because they are terribly afraid of them, and this very fear resists the Indians from extending their helping hands to the “revolutionaries”, not that they do not love them.

The official terrorism is surely to be met by counter-terrorism. A spirit of utter helplessness pervades every strata of our society and terrorism is an effective means of restoring the proper spirits in the society without which progress will be difficult. Moreover, the English masters and their hired lackeys can never be allowed to do whatever they like, unhampered, unmolested. Every possible difficulty and resistance must be thrown in their way. Terrorism has an international bearing also because the attentions of the enemies of England are at once drawn towards India through the acts of terrorism and revolutionary demonstrations and revolutionaries are hereby able to form an alliance with them, and thus expedite the speedy attainment of India’s deliverance. But this revolutionary party has deliberately abstained itself from entering into this terrorist campaign at the present moment even at the greatest provocation in the form of outrages committed on their sisters and mothers by the agents of a foreign government, simply because the party is waiting to deliver the final blow. But when expediency will demand it, the party will unhesitatingly enter into a desperate campaign of terrorism, when the life of every officer and the individual, who will be helping the foreign rulers in any way, will be made intolerable, be he

Indian or European, high or low. But even then the party will never forget that terrorism is not their object and they will try incessantly to organise a band of selfless and devoted workers who will devote their best energies, towards the political and social emancipation of their country. They will always remember that the making of nations require the self-sacrifice of thousands of obscure men and women who care more for the idea of their country than for their own comfort or interest, their own lives and the lives of those whom they love.<sup>8</sup>

Besides the Revolutionary Party of India new groups of revolutionaries also begun to be formed from about this time. Especially worth mentioning is the Chittagong Group led by Surya Sen. Still another group was founded by Hemchandra Ghosh in the University area of Dacca. Later it became divided into two halves, the *Sri Sangha* and the *Bengal Volunteers*. Both the Chittagong and Dacca groups were linked with the *Jugantar*.

The revolutionaries in West Bengal also once more became active in developing their contacts with the people. Murders took place in Calcutta and elsewhere; the bomb and pistol were used to eradicate the enemies and spies in the revolutionary party. Sir Charles Tegart, Commissioner of Police in Calcutta was considered by the revolutionaries as one of the greatest detective brains in the world. He became the object of their vengeance. Gopi Nath Saha, a young Bengali boy in his teens, was commissioned to murder him. But through mistaken identity Gopinath took Mr. Earnest Day, another Englishman for him as the Commissioner and fired the shot and

8. The above leaflet was issued in the name of Vijay Kumar, President, Central Council of the Revolutionary Party of India. [quoted in *Ibid*, pp. 349-50]. It was followed by a Bengali leaflet written by Sanyal under his signature styled as *Deshbashir Prati Nivedan* i.e. an appeal to my countrymen. [Manmath Nath Gupta, *They Lived Dangerously* (New Delhi, People's Publishing House, 1970)].

murdered Mr. Day in January 1924, in a crowded and main thoroughfare of Calcutta. The young revolutionary was arrested and tried at the High Court of Calcutta, but offered no statement in his defence. He only asserted that though he had failed in his mission, someone else would surely succeed. He expressed his sincere sorrow for having killed an innocent man. But he hoped that every drop of his blood would create conscience of freedom and nurse the seed of revolution in every Indian family. He was sentenced to death by hanging. But before that, on the wall of the jail he had inscribed: "There is no place for *Ahimsa* in world politics."<sup>9</sup>

In Uttar Pradesh, Ram Prasad Bismil reorganized a revolutionary group. In his work he was greatly helped by Jogesh Chandra Chatterji and Sachindra Nath Sanyal, the two revolutionary leaders of Bengal *Anushilan*. As the *Anushilan* was very popular in Bengal only, for working outside Bengal even as a unit of *Anushilan*, some other party name was needed. Therefore, there was jointly founded at Kanpur on 3 October 1925 the new party which was named *Hindustan Republican Association*. Within a short span of time the influence of this group spread in all the prominent cities of Uttar Pradesh. It aimed at the founding of a "Federal Republic of the United States of India by armed revolution and end exploitation of man by man."<sup>10</sup> In one of its leaflets it was declared that among modern States, Soviet Russia was the ideal for the Indian revolutionaries.<sup>11</sup>

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9. Report of the native-owned newspapers and journals published in Bengal (confidential) April 1924, p. 13. See also J. C. Chatterji, *Indian Revolutionaries in Conference* (Calcutta, 1961), p. 25; and J. C. Chatterji, *In Search of Freedom*, n. 1, pp. 208-9 and *Swatantra Sangram* (Varanasi, Gyan Mandal Ltd., 1971) pp. 83-84.

10. Cited by Jogesh Chandra Chatterji, *Indian Revolutionaries in Conference*, n. 9, p. 24. Text of the Constitution has been inserted by Jogesh Chandra Chatterji, *In Search of Freedom*, n. 1, pp. 338-45. See also p. 239.

11. Cited by J. C. Chatterji, *Indian Revolutionaries in Conference*, n. 9, p. 24.

In other provinces similar organizations were either newly formed or revived actively. Most prominent among them were *Hindustan Sewa Dal* organized by Fanindra Nath in Bihar; the *Gupt Samiti* (secret society) established by Sukh Deo in Lahore; and the *Naujawan Bharat Sabha*<sup>12</sup> founded by Bhagat Singh and Bhagwati Charan in 1925. Bhagat Singh was appointed its General Secretary. Their other co-workers were youngmen like Dhanvantari, Ahasan Illahi and Sukhdev Raj. Within a few days all the Congress youngmen with socialist bent of mind like Dr. Satya Pal, Dr. Saifuddin Kitchlew, Kedar Nath Sehgal associated themselves with the organization.

The main object of the *Naujawan Bharat Sabha*<sup>13</sup> was to criticize the compromising moderate policies of the Congress led by Gandhiji and to inspire the people to take interest in the radical political programme and thus to inculcate a sympathetic outlook in the public for the revolutionary movement.

Besides distributing small leaflets detailing their radical programme to eradicate the British domination the *Sabha* in its early years, also celebrated the death anniversary of an eighteen-year-old young revolutionary Kartar Singh Sarabha who was hanged in the Lahore Conspiracy Case of 1915. His portrait was inaugurated in the Braidella Hall in Lahore. Both Mrs. Durgadevi and Sudhila Devi paid their homage to the martyr by sprinkling the blood of their fingers on the portrait.

12. For further study see Sukhdev Raj, *Jab Jyoti Jagi* (Mirzapore, Karantikari Prakshan, 1971), p. 16.

13. At about this time the Communists had also started operating on Indian political scene. For further study see author's *Peasants' and Workers' Movement in India* (New Delhi, People's Publishing House, 1971); Muzaffar Ahmad, *Myself and the Communist Party of India: 1920-1929* (Calcutta, National Book Agency, 1970) and Dr. Adhikari, *Documentary History of the Communist Party of India* (New Delhi, People's Publishing House, 1971).

The function was an open manifestation of calling upon the youngmen to devote themselves to the revolutionary activities.

### **Formation Of Central Organization**

On 8 and 9 September 1928, all the prominent workers and leaders of these various revolutionary organizations in various provinces met in a conference near Firoz Shah Kotla in Delhi. The prominent participants in the meeting were Sukh Dev and Bhagat Singh from Punjab; Kundal Lal from Rajputana; Shiv Verma, Brahma Dutt Misra, Jai Dev, Vijay Kumar Sinha, Surrendra Nath Pandey from the United Provinces; and Mahindra Nath Ghose and Man Mohan Banerjee from Bihar. They founded an all-India political body. It came to be known as the *Hindustan Socialist Republican Army* (HSRA). To organize the work on an extensive scale, persons like Sukh Dev, Fanindra Nath Ghose, Bhagvati Charan and Kundan Lal were appointed the chief organizers respectively in the United Provinces, Bihar, the Punjab and Rajputana. Kundan Lal was elected the Chairman of the Central Committee and Chander Shekhar Azad was appointed the Commander-in-Chief of the Association. Vijay Kumar Sinha and Bhagat Singh were placed in charge of ensuring inter-provincial co-ordination. The headquarters of the party were kept at Agra as an active centre for recruiting youngmen for revolutionary action. Other active members of the group were Gaya Prasad, Kishori Lal, Surendra Nath Pandey, Batukeshwar Dutt, Birendra Nath Pande, Raj Guru, Yashpal, Bhagwandas Mahour, Shrimati Durga Bai, Sushila Didi (or Sushila Azad), Prem Nath and others. The ideal of the new organization was to establish a socialist republican State. In its view socialism alone would bring to an end all exploitation of the Indian people by a foreign power.

A few years later the old revolutionaries recently released from jail also joined the HSRA.

### ***Literature That Inspired***

To find out an alternative for the solution of national problems after the failure of the Non-Co-operation Movement the young revolutionaries also used to read Dainbin's *My Fight for Irish Freedom*, the biographies of Mazzini and Gairibaldi, the history of French Revolution, the progressive revolutionary ideas propounded by Voltaire and Rousseau, and the glimpses of the October revolutionaries. In his statement before the court, Fanindra Nath Ghosh had referred to the study of the following books by the revolutionaries at their Agra centre :

*The History of the Revolutionary Struggle in British India, Open and Secret; The Ideal of Republic; Indian Princes and Revolutionaries* (Sarkar's pamphlet); *Turkish Messages to India's Muslim Rulers; Berlin Committee and the German Plot; Non-Co-operatoin; Swaraj Without Clear Definition; Failure of Non-Co-operatoin Movement and the Revolutionary Parties; Communist Thought; Spritualism; Advanced Socialist Thought; Commumist School of Thought Nehru Report; Terrorists and Mass Revolutionaries; Anarchism and Socialism; Communism, Syndicalism and Collectivism; The Revolution and the World Revolution; Use of Explosives; Monopoly or How Labour is Robbed; Bharatiya Itihas Ka Bhougolik Adhar; Les Miserables*, etc.<sup>14</sup>

With the active co-operation of Professor Chhabil Das, Principal, National College, Lahore, the *Naujawan Bharat Shabha* publishend small tracts like "Why do we want *swaraj*". The leaflet made a comparative study of poverty-stricken India with other advanced countries and exposed the parasitic character of the so-called saints burdening the society with their luxurious life. It referred to the disease and pestilence that vitiated the atmosphere of the country. It also exposed the socio-economic gap between the high and low. Besides, it qouted the statements

14. Yashpal, *Simhavalokan : My Experiences of the Armed Revolution* (Lucknow, Viplav Karyalaya, 1952), Vol. II, pp. 170-71.

of arrogant and die-hard imperialist bureaucrats who looked upon India with contempt and swore to hold it by sword.<sup>15</sup> Another tract was entitled "Two Words to the Youngmen" detailing the miseries and misfortunes of the land of their birth. In a third tract, there was translated "Wealth of Nation", an essay written by Lala Hardayal, the famous *Ghadarite*. It ended with a call to the young people : "Tell the people that the old gods and goddesses have failed and died. Their holy places are good for nothing. Move in search of new pilgrim centres that are really the places like London, Paris and New York, where knowledge and science are making tremendous advance."<sup>16</sup>

During this time, a large number of books were also written by the former members of the revolutionary movement, emphasizing their theories for attaining national liberation and *swaraj* for the people of India. Most prominent, inspiring and patriotic writings among them were the *Story of an Exile* by Upendra Nath Bandopadhyaya; *Reminiscences and Impressions of Prison Life* by Bareindra Kumar Ghose and Ullaskar Dutt; *Unpublished Political History of India* by Bhupendra Nath Dutt; *Story of the Revolutionary Movement in Bengal* by Nalin Kishore Guha, *My Prison Life* by Sachindra Nath Sanyal, *Man ki Lehar*, *Bolshevikon ki Kartut* and *Swadesh Rang* by Ram Prasad 'Bismil'. Related to this also may be mentioned *Pather Dabi* (The Right of Way), of which the first edition of three thousand copies was sold before it could reach the shops of the booksellers, and within a month of its publication, was being sold in the market at double of its original price. As the theme of the book was the very anti-thesis of Gandhian doctrine of Non-violence, it was proscribed a few months after its publication by the Provincial Government. Besides, there also appeared another book *Russ ki Rajya Kranti*

15. Sukh Dev Raj, n. 12, pp. 24-25.

16. *Ibid*, p. 26. See also the third paragraph of the text of the Manifesto issued by *Naujawan Bharat Sabha*, *Yuvakranti*, n. 3, pp. 7-8,



**Class origin of the revolutionaries and national degradation**

Like their predecessors the young revolutionaries of this period also felt a deep agony over the economic degradation of the poor masses. It was also one of the reasons that led to the joining of the revolutionary movement by the youngmen. In his *Simahavalokan*, Yashpal records the statement of Inder Pal on this issue. On the eve of blowing the Viceroy's train near New Delhi in 1929 Inder Pal was deputed to remain in an isolated *Sarai* in the guise of a *Sadhu*. For making the arrangement of his meals he used to visit the nearby villages of Tahkh-and and Madanpore every day. In the course of this adventure he came to know about the down-trodden economic conditions of the peasantry due to the destruction of the two crops one after another. They could not pay their taxes and remained without food for many days. However, when the Government came to their rescue and engaged them in constructing a dam they were paid only two annas daily per head as wages. On the other hand, the Government spent more than the total payment made to these villagers, on the inspection tour of the officials. Inder Pal was deeply moved by such cases. He gathered the impression that the prevailing political order controlled by alien forces could not redeem the poor peasantry from its economic troubles. In great agony he requested his elderly colleagues like Yashpal and Bhagyati Charan to provide him the opportunity to blow the Viceroy's train by bomb. He was deeply anxious to be arrested after the incident and to have an opportunity to spotlight their miseries. He stated:

I will speak like Bhagat Singh in the Court. I will tell the Tribunal that I have thrown the bomb to revenge the injustice being done to the peasantry in Tahkhand in particular and those all over the country in general.<sup>17</sup>

17. Yashpal, n 14, p. 96.

*The Naujawan Bharat Sabha* had also started publishing "In-  
(Footnote continued)

Quite a large number of these revolutionaries belonged to the economically distressed masses living in the rural side of the country. Dominated as this class was along with others, by a foreign power, it was very difficult for it to make its both ends meet. Bhagat Singh was the son of a peasant. Chander Shekhar Azad was the son of a gardner getting Rs. 7/- a month as pay. Others' origin was also not very much different. Lack of opportunities made them ponder over the economic progress of the country. After comleting their primary or secondary studies they moved to the cities and were swept away in their young age by the modern materialistic life of the cities. In his biography of C.R. Das, Mr. P. C. Ray appeared to give true expression to their feelings when he stated that "Young India has drunk so deep of the new and heady wine of modern materialism that the metaphysics of quiescences and the philosophy of fatalism can no longer drug or dupe her into a life of somnolence or slumber, and 'he of the mystic East' is no longer 'touched with might'....The prophets of reaction and revivalism are considered back numbers today."<sup>18</sup> It was neither a return to the golden era of India nor an existence of self-satisfied loneliness,

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dependent India tract series". One of them headed "Indian Peasants" was a translation from Lala Har Dayal. Highlighting the importance of peasants and workers it was stated :

If suddenly one night die all the rich people of the world like Tatas, Batas and Birlas, the people, awaking in the morning, will not feel much about it. If on the contrary, all the peasants and workers meet the same fate, one would feel that the world is not worth living. It is worse than hell. [Cited by Sukh Dev Raj, n. 12, pp. 26-27].

In still another leaflet entitled : "Worst Sin in the World is Poverty" the youngmen were exhorted to eradicate poverty root and branch, to make an equitable distribution of wealth and to have an equal opportunity to advance and share power. [*Ibid*, p.27]. See also the statement of Bhagat Singh cited by Rameshwar Ashant, *Bhagat Singh* (Delhi, 1971), pp. 43-6.

18. P. C. Ray, *Life and Times of C. R. Das* (Oxford University Press, 1927), p. 216,

that the young Indian now yearned for. Nor was it in the academy of Daulatpur or the Visva Bharati of Bolepur, or the Gurukul Kangri of Haridwar that young intelligentsia assembled in their thousands. Vedantism and Eastern culture might be good, but economic freedom was better. India of young people did not want to separate itself from the hopes and ambitions of the other modern nations of the world, only to get consolation and happiness in sublime spiritualism which had become slowly petrified in immutable formalism and in the dignified lifelessness of Vedantic and Tantric rites. It was on freedom from alien economic domination that the young revolutionaries had set their devoted attention and not on freedom from enjoyments of modern life, or commercialism or industrialism either.<sup>19</sup> No Royal Commission or attractive declaration of alien object in India, soothing remedies of the political unrest or eradication of the grievances, appeared to hinder the aspirations of these "impatient missionaries,"<sup>20</sup> who could find no alternative to attain their liberation except by making the duration of the prevailing system short in India.

### Dislike For Alien Rule

There prevailed a strong resentment and indignation in the mind of the young revolutionaries, like their predecessors, against the perpetuation of alien empire which they considered responsible for their degradation and which in the words of George Orwell was "simply a device for giving trade monopolies to the English." That is why they were inspired to liberate their country from it. They felt a great jealousy and hatred towards the pomp and show maintained by the alien regime at the cost of the indigenous people. Watching of their powerful paraphernalia and expression of political power through a strong and centralized administrative machinery

19. *Ibid*, p 217. See also the text of manifesto issued by *Naujawan Bharat Sabha*, published in *Mukti*, a collection of documents related to HSPRS and of writings and speeches by Bhagat Singh and others (Delhi, Mukti Prakashan, 1972), pp. 11-16.

20. *Ibid*,

provoked the young revolutionaries to organize insurrections which according to H. G. Wells were the result of "the resentment of men held back from life, with their mouths gagged and their hands bound behind them." One such incident is worth mentioning. On 23 December, 1912, Lord Hardinge was taken in procession on the back of an elephant in Delhi. Besides him, there were Rajas and Maharajas along with their army commanders. Swords shone bright. The military band kept them all in tune. The Union Jack fluttered and flapped continuously. The guns boomed. Many people had assembled to witness the parade. "On the breast of our motherland", said Savarkar, "a carpet of national humiliation was spread out and dancers moved on it. For the nation it was a funeral procession. Naturally when others in Chandni Chowk showered flowers and coconuts, the representatives of those who had felt insult, hurled a bomb....Verily the triumphant procession was turned into a funeral."\*

The revolutionaries felt that without producing discontent and contempt against the alien power and domination there could not be created a dislike, disapproval and opposition to its continuation. A young revolutionary, Sachindra Nath Sanyal, wrote to Gandhiji in February 1925 that it was simply inconceivable and incomprehensible to think that England which believed in Jallianwalla Bagh massacres as a legitimate means of self-defence, and which tried the O'Dwyer-Nair case and gave judgment in favour of "barbarism",<sup>21</sup>

\*For further study see also Dr. Sangat Singh, "the Hardinge Bomb Incident", *Patriot*, magazine section (New Delhi), 20 August 1972, pp. 3 & 7.

21. *Young India* 1924-26, n. 3, p. 900.

Speaking on the same problem in 1930 in the second Lahore Conspiracy Case Bhagat Singh and others had said :

"We believe that imperialism is nothing less than a conspiracy of dacoity. Imperialism is apex of loot of one nation by another. If people refuse to submit to its dictatorial demands the imperialists do not hesitate to make the blood of innocent people flow," [*Mukti*, n. 19, p. 37].

could be just and generous out of her free will. The alien government was determined to crush any manifestation of "manhood".<sup>22</sup> In another letter written in April 1925 by another young revolutionary, Manmath Nath Gupta to Gandhiji, it was emphatically pointed out that "the adversary has a vile body which vitiates the soul (of the nation) and that the sooner it is destroyed the better for him."<sup>23</sup>

Discontented thus, whenever anyone of them saw the English people on the road, in a cafe or a restaurant, however gentle they might be looking by their appearance, the revolutionaries felt a natural hatred against them. In jealousy they used to think that the people who really belonged to the country and laboured hard for it, were perpetuating miserable and dusty existence, but the English enjoyed the fruits of their hard toil. Their happiness was the misery of the Indian people. The improvement of this sorrowful state of affairs necessitated the inculcation of hatred against the aliens. Was it not shameful that the handful of foreigners were able to rule India, not by the free consent of the people but by "the force of sword?"<sup>24</sup> Was it not a fact that a few "selfish, tyrant and obdurate men"<sup>25</sup> had, as they did, refused to listen to reason and continued to "tyrannise and do injustice"<sup>26</sup> to a mass of people. There could be no alternative except to boycott and eliminate this system. He was determined that he would give no co-operation of any sort, told the young Yashpal to one

22 . *Ibid*, p. 903.

23 . *Ibid*, p. 915. "Independence will come", said Bhagat Singh in a public meeting at Layallpur, 'only by fighting. Bullet for bullet, blood for blood policy will have to be adopted.' Rameshwar Ashant, *Bhagat Singh* (Delhi, 1971) p. 54. See also the fourth paragraph of the text of the manifesto issued by *Naujawan Bharat Sabha* inserted in *Yuvakranti*, n. 3, p. 8.

24 . *Ibid*, p. 903. See also the text of the manifesto issued by *Naujawan Bharat Sabha*, inserted in *Mukti*, n. 19, pp. 11-12.

25 . Jag Prवेश Chander, ed., *Gita the Mother : A Collection of Writings* (Lahore, Free India Publications, 1944), p. 182.

26 . *Ibid*,

of his teachers once, to the foreign government because he was not in favour of maintaining the foreign domination in any country.<sup>27</sup> Moving towards the gallows on 19 December 1927 Ram Prasad "Bismil", the leader of the revolutionary participants in the Kakori case, had proclaimed with full vigour : "I wish the downfall of the British Empire."<sup>28</sup> "Overthrow those feet that are crushing our Motherland," said Bhagat Singh at the time of inaugurating *Naujawan Bharat Sabha*.

In the early days of second decade of the twentieth century there was founded an organization named *Matrivedi* by Pt. Gaindalal Dixit of Mainpuri Conspiracy fame. The members admitted into the society had to signify their strict obedience to a pledge containing *inter alia* the following couplet :

Forward brethren and seize the William Fort  
Pick and kill all the White sort.<sup>29</sup>

To memorize their victories over Indians in various battles the British rulers had raised statues of their prominent soldiers at public places in a number of cities. For instance, in Lahore there was the statue of Mr. Lawrence holding pen in one hand and the sword in the other with an inscription as below :

"Will you be governed by pen or sword ?"<sup>30</sup>

This was a challenge to any valiant freedom fighter. "Empires are relics of barbarism, and must disappear in the course of social evolution", thus believed Lala Har Dayal.<sup>31</sup>

27. Yashpal, n. 14, Vol I, p. 87.

28. Banarsi Das and Thakur Desh Raj, ed., *Swami Keshvanand Adhinandan Granth*, an anthology of writings (Sangaria, Gramothan Vidya-pith, 1958), p. 9.

29. Verse quoted by Chandershekhar Shastri, a close colleague of the revolutionaries in *Bharatiya Aatankvad Ka Itihas* (Kanpur, Endman Sahitya Mandir, 1939), p. 278.

30. For further study see Sukh Dev Raj, n. 12, p. 35.

31. Dharmavira, *Lala Har Dayal and Revolutionary Movements of His* (footnote contd.)

Condemning the rulers Lala Har Dayal had also said that these “pedlars of puny conceits and ephemeral paradoxes can never impose their conditions and inanities on the human race which lives and loves and aspires and achieves while these petulant and self-centred Troglodytes growl amorphous nonsense from their darkness. Theirs is the open cult of brute force and money-power. It is obscene worship of Mars and Mammon. In India they pose as teachers and benefactors. But the ferocious Mongol and Assyrian conquerors were more honest than these benefactors. They raised towers of skulls to commemorate their victories, but these ‘civilized’ tyrants built towers of metal and stone here and there” to enslave humanity at large.<sup>32</sup>

The small group organized by Har Dayal and Rash Behari had also sown the ideas of revolt in general public and Indian army. The Liberty Pamphlets published by the revolutionaries like Bhai Bal Mukand (he belonged to the legendary house of Bhai Mati Das who had been sawn into two by the Emperor Aurangzeb in Chandni Chowk, Delhi) found their way into army cantonments. Besides, “Spit and split Empire” pamphlets, written by Master Amir Chand, too began to circulate. Some of them read thus : “The enemies of the nation, to whichever class, creed, or religion they may belong, ought to be destroyed. This is the mandate of our books like Gita, the Vedas and the Koran.”<sup>33</sup> At about this time Lala Har Dayal also issued his famous *Yugantar circular*. It was a defiant thunder of the rebel, which shook the alien Empire. Hailing the act of the bomb-thrower at Hardinge, Lalaji remarked : “He

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*Times* (New Delhi, Indian Book Company, 1970), pp. 63 and 151. See also the text of the manifesto issued by *Naujawan Bharat Sabha* inserted in *Yuvakrant*, n. 3, p. 7.

32 . Ibid. p. 63.

33 . Cited by Balshastri Hardas, *Armed Struggle*, p. 228. See also the full text of the statement “Philosophy of Bomb” inserted in *Mukti*, n. 19, pp. 6-10.

came like a blessing in answer to oft-repeated sighs and yearnings. He awakened us from sleep—he flashed a dazzling light before our drooping eye-lids....In the midst of despair and sorrow, he has sent a thrill of joy and hope from one corner of the land to the other. While all India was dumb with fear he has spoken with the voice of Bheema and Arjuna.... Alone among cowards and slaves he has shown that the race of man has not died out in India. With his *bajravani* he has given forth the triumphant cry of freedom on the soil of Hindustan. May *durbars* and bombs go together till there are no more *durbars* on the surface of the earth.”<sup>34</sup>

In due course of time the *Ghadar* Party was founded by Indian immigrants in the United States of America. They started a journal by the name of *Ghadar* whose chief editor was Lala Har Dayal. The editorial in the first issue which appeared on 1 November 1913 contained something very inspiring and important to say about the mission before the paper. The style was absorbing and the words “Passion-laden and message-bearing”. Here are a few excerpts : “What is our name? *Ghadar* ! What is our work ? *Ghadar* ! Where will the *Ghadar* break out ? In India! When ? In a few years when rifles and blood will take the place of pen and ink ! Why ? Because the people can no longer bear the oppression and tyranny practised under British rule.” The title page bore a set feature entitled *Angrezi Raj Ka Kachcha Chittha* (the balance sheet of British rule in India). Here were listed items of indictment of British Government in India. So many millions died of famine and hunger, so many were illiterates, so much wealth was taken away to England every year, so on and so forth.

According to the Sedition Committee (1918) Report the *Ghadar* was of violent anti-British nature, playing on every passion which it could possibly excite, preaching rebellion in every sentence, and exhorting all Indians to go to India with

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34 . Dharmavira, n. 31, p. 175. See also pp. 129-31.



the immediate object of causing revolution and expelling the *Fireenghi* by any and every means :

*Chalo, Chaliye. desh nun yuddh karan,  
Eho akhari vachan farman ho jaye !  
Jadon asi paye si gaflat de bich,  
Fireenghi ne hatiya liya sadhi sarkar nu !!*

No sooner such a song was sung at a public gathering by young men like Kartar Singh Sarabha, the tempo of the meeting began to flare up. Clappings, cheers and *Jayakars* boomed in the sky. The will to be free thrilled the whole atmosphere. The whole gathering began to sing with the reciter. Almost all vowed to die together on the altar of Motherland.

When the war was being fought in Europe, the Ghadarites accelerated their activities. They attempted to stop the Indian soldiers from fighting for the British. The paper *Ghadar* appealed to them in its own remarkable manner. On 18 August 1914, it carried the following instructions for the soldiers of national liberation :

Spread the literature of revolution;  
Help and encourage all resistance—armed and passive;  
Withdraw all your funds from British banks,  
Inspire the Indian army to strike at every point against the *fireeghis*.

When the Sikh revolutionaries were preparing the Army to revolt, somehow or the other the news was distilled to Savarkar in the Andamans. "As I read the headline (of a press cutting), a thrill went through my heart and all over the body.... Since the war of Independence in 1857, the word mutiny had been expunged from the political vocabulary of India, the idea had faded out of her political sky. In the conflagration of the European War of 1914, it had risen Phoenix-like to inflame that sky, and the daring of the people had risen to its highest point in that thermometer."\*

\* V. D. Savakar, *the story of my Transportation for Life* (Bombay, 1950), pp. 366-67.

On their reaching in India in 1915 although some were arrested, yet nearly 3,125 patriots carried the message of *Ghadar* in Northern India. Besides the townfolk, the village teachers, peasants, carpenters, smiths and cobblers were won over by the revolutionary patriots.<sup>35</sup>

### Patriotism

Most of these young revolutionaries who fought for freedom in their own way against innumerable odd situations and complexities laid down the foundation of a heroic and patriotic tradition. Partly influenced by their socio-economic background of peasant and lower middle-class origin in most of the cases, with certain exceptions like Bhagwati Charan, and partly under the impact of the mass political consciousness generated by the mass demonstrations against the Rowlatt Act, the Jallianwalla Bagh tragedy and the Non-Co-operation Movement, they were inspired to do something for their enslaved nation. That early age of theirs gave evidence of their radical patriotism. They sacrificed their life for the freedom of the "Motherland" without anticipating any reward for their national work. Few illustrations are worth quoting : Leaving his home in his young age of ten years Chandra Shekhar Azad came to Banaras and studied Sanskrit for one year. When he was eleven years old, he participated in the *satyagraha* movement, and was arrested by the police. Putting both his hands in one handcuff, he was produced before the magistrate. The latter asked him his name. Fed as he was on tiger's meat in his childhood according to the prevalent local tradition of the princely state transforming the young into fearless warriors, he replied spontaneously : "My name is Azad." He was next asked of his parentage to which he replied : "My father's name is Bharatvarsh and my mother's name is Bharat Mata." On further inquiry he told his residential address as "prison."<sup>36</sup>

35 Dharmavira, n. 31, p. 208.

36. Manmath Nath Gupta *Bharat Men Sashtakranti-Chesta Ka Romancha-kari Itihas* (Allahabad, 1952, Fourth ed.), Vol. I, p. 221. For further

(footnote contd.)

Whereupon the magistrate said : "Do you know before whom you are standing ?" To which he nonchalantly said : "Yes, I know that I am before a Government agent who is cutting the throat of his own brethren." The magistrate got more angry and said : "This brash young lad is talking too much."<sup>37</sup> He added contemptuously : You are not arm-long and yet think to launch a movement. Go. go away."<sup>38</sup>

The magistrate could not send Azad to imprisonment because he was a minor. He ordered that the accused should be thrashed with twelve lashes, so that this whipping would bring him to his senses. But next day everybody in Banaras was talking of Azad's bravery with which he challenged British imperialism in India. There was published a brief article, along with a photo, entitled "Veer Balak Azad" in *Maryada* edited by Sampurnanand. Later on, in his *Memoirs and Reflections* he again admired the young Chander Shekhar and admonished the imperialist government for its barbarism and foolishness.

When the police were taking him from the courts, Azad annoyed the magistrate, and left the court with an air of contempt on his face. In the Banaras jail the police stripped him naked and tied to a pillar, and then started whipping him. At each lash he shouted "Inquilab Zindabad", "Bharat Mata Ki Jai", "Down with British Flag" and "Mahatama Gandhi Ki Jai"

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study see also *Swatantra Sangram*, a golden jubilee publication by the daily *Aaj* (Varanasi, Gyan Mandal Ltd., 1971), p. 89; Rameshwar Ashant, *Azad* (Delhi, Hindi Bal Pocket Books, 1971), p. 13, and Shankar Sultanpuri, *Krantikari Azad* (Delhi, Hindi Bal Pocket Books, 1970, Fourth ed.), p. 53.

37. Sushila Azad, "Heroic Martyrdom of Chandra Shekhar Azad", *Blitz* (Bombay) 9 July 1960 p. 17, col. 1. It may be recalled that the author was an active participant and close colleague of the revolutionaries.

38. Yashpal, *Simhavalokan*, n. 14, Part III, p. 62.

till the sixth lash flayed his body and he became unconscious.<sup>39</sup> those days such slogans were considered to be declaration of belligerency. But the whipping continued till the twelfth lash fell, and Azad's skin was severely torned. In that unconscious condition he was admitted to the hospital where he was treated for nearly a month. On leaving the hospital he pledged: "So long as I am alive, I will work for the Motherland and see that I do not fall into the hands of the police."<sup>40</sup> Years later one of his colleagues cut a joke saying that the British Government would have to manufacture a special handcuff to grapple with his fattened wrists. Azad who had put on much weight those days angrily retorted : "It is impossible to handcuff Azad now ! It has once been done. This body may be torn to pieces, but will never be surrendered."<sup>41</sup>

After joining the revolutionary movement, one day Chandra Shekhar Azad was conveyed a message from his mother who was very anxious to see her son. But Azad replied:

Every mother of India is a mother of mine. Mostly they are in trouble like this and anxious to see their sons, I cannot think only of my mother. I have to think of all these mothers. I have respect for all of them. When the time will come, I will meet all of them, and her also.<sup>42</sup>

A similar patriotic spirit was displayed by Yashpal during those revolutionary days. More than a year had passed when he had seen his mother. She was very keen to meet him and came to see him in Lahore when he was underground. During their conversation the mother referred to her economic hardships. In reply Yashpal said that he was doing not any

39. Sushila Azad, n, 37.

40. Ibid, col. 2.

41. Sushila Azad, "Chandra Shekhar", *Narmada* (Delhi, Nutan Publishing House, April 1960, p. 44.

42. Sushila Azad, "Heroic Martyrdom of Chandra Shekhar Azad" *Blitz* (Bombay), 16 July 1930, p. 14, colm. 1.

bad work. It was his duty to eradicate the alien enslavement. She had advised him to be true and brave in his childhood: this social work he was doing. All persons did take care of their respective mothers; somebody must take care of the *Bharat Mata*. Bhagat Singh and Sukh Dev were already behind the bars due to their service of the "Motherland".<sup>43</sup>

The love for the country had been imbibed strongly by many of the revolutionaries since their school or college days. In the course of their study in National college at Lahore both Yahspal and Bhagat Singh one day went for boating in Ravi river. In their conversation Yashpal said to Bhagat Singh with full confidence: "Let us pledge our lives to the country". Bhagat Singh suddenly became serious and extending his hand towards his friend stated: "I do pledge."<sup>44</sup> At about this time the parents of Bhagat Singh wanted to marry him, but he evaded as he had an intense urge to engage himself in the revolutionary activities and fight out British Imperialism. On the other hand, family pressure was trying to detract him. He, therefore, went to one of his teachers in National College, who had inspired him for political movement. At about this juncture Sachindra Nath Sanyal happened to arrive at Lahore. The teacher unfolded the whole complex to him. Sanyal expressed his willingness to see Bhagat Singh and eventually when they met Sanyal asked him whether he was fully ready to leave his family and relations for the cause. The answers to these questions were, of course, in the affirmative. Sanyal, therefore, sent Bhagat Singh to contact Jogesh Chandra Chatterji, who enrolled him in the movement.<sup>45</sup>

Equally touching and patriotic words were uttered by Pt. Gaindalal Dixit, the leader of *Shivaji Samiti* and the

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43 . Yashpal *Simhavalokan*, n. 14, p. 171.

44 . Ibid, Part I, p. 89. See also the version given by Rameshwar Ashant, *Bhagat Singh* (Delhi, Hindi Bal Pocket Books, 1971), pp. 14-15.

45 . Jogesh Chandra Chatterji, n. 1, p. 220.

Mainpuri Conspiracy case, on the eve of his death in the Irwin Hospital at New Delhi on 21 September 1920. Seeing his pathetic ailing condition his colleagues and wife began to weep bitterly. Consoling all of them he said: "Why do you weep? I have reached this condition on account of my service to the depressed Motherland. You people, do not worry; if I die for the cause of Motherland, I will think my duty is fulfilled and my soul will be at peace if you people assist me in the discharge of service." Replying to his wife's grievous words as to who of her was left in the world, with a sigh and smile Panditji said: "Who is of the millions of widows? Who is of the millions of foundlings? Who is of the 22 crores starving peasants? Who is of the enslaved Motherland? And He who is the saviour of all these is your saviour." "I am sorry that I could not revenge the oppression of oppressors and I die with this unfulfilled desire in my heart", he concluded.<sup>46</sup>

46. The account has been rendered by Ram Prasad "Bismil," a close colleague of the deceased, in an article "The Leaders of the Mainpuri Conspiracy" included in Surendera Sharma, ed., *Swadhinata Ke Pujari* (Allahabad, Sarda Sadan, 1948), pp. 116-27.

Rejendra Lahiri was first among those prisoners of Kakori Case who were sentenced to death. On 14 December 1927 three days before being hanged, he wrote an inspiring letter to his colleagues from Gonda prison: "Death is nothing but another name of life. Therefore the man should neither feel sorry nor be afraid of death. It is as natural as the rising of sun in the morning. If it is true that history takes a turn then I feel that our death will not be futile. [The text of the letter has been quoted by Manmath Nath Gupta who was an active participant in the looting of the train at Kakori, in *Bharat Men Sashtakraanti Chesta Ka Romanchkari Ithias*, n. 36, p. 238].

Similar faith is expressed by Ram Prasad "Bismil" in his letter to a friend a few days prior to his hanging, wherein he said that he was well in knowledge of what was to occur on 19th instant and was aptly prepared for that. He exhibited his belief that death was nothing but a change of corporal garments. He was sure that his spirit would return with greater vigour and power

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Expressing similar sentiments two years later in 1922 Rash Behari Bose had written from Tokyo to Sachin Sanyal : "Independence India must have. Because her Independence is essential for regeneration of the whole world. It is not the end in itself, but it is a means to an end and that end is the

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for the service of its "Motherland" and her poor people [Ibid]. On the eve of hanging when he was given some milk, he refused by stating that he would take the milk of the "Motherland only." When the police had come to arrest him in connection with Kakori Case he called upon his parents, brothers and sisters and said that he was going, not knowing when he would come back and even if it meant his perishment he would stick to it. He did not fear prison nor death and rebuffed their persuasion saying that only lions not jackals were made behind bars. [Experience related by his elder sister Shastri Devi, "My Brother Bismil", *Narmada* (Delhi), April 1960, p. 6].

Let the reader also peep a little more to a little earlier period. For sooting to death Wiillam Curzon Wyllie in the very heart of British Empire a young revolutionary, Madan Lal Dhingra, was hanged on 17 August 1909. In the court he issued a statement "Challenge" that stirred every patriotic Indian. It read:

I admit that the other day I attempted to shed English blood intentionally and on purpose, as a humbly protest against the inhuman transportations and hangings of Indian youth. In this attempt I consulted none but my own conscience, conspired with none but my own duty. The only lesson required in india to learn is how to die and the only way the teach it is by dying alone. The war will continue between India and England as long as present unnatural relation does not cease....It is my fervent prayer May I be reborn of the same mother and may I re-die in the same sacred cause till my mission is done and she stands free for thegood of humanity.

[Home (Pol.-B), September 1909, No. 49, National Archives of India].

On reading the above statement both Churchill Lloyd George compared Dhingra with Plutarch's immortal heroes, [ W. S. Blunt, *My Diaries*, Vol. II, p. 298].

destruction of imperialism and militarism and the creation of a better world for all to live in.”\*

Suffice would be to quote still one more instance of this nature. In “Phul Baug” at Cawnpore, the National Flag was hoisted and womenfolk after bathing in the Ganges, used to go daily and worship the flag, and put flowers on it. The authorities disapproved this. They passed an order that the flag should be removed from that place. Knowing this, Ganesh Shanker Vidyarthi sent a message to Azad to do something so that the National Flag might not be removed from its place. In reply he stated: I will see who has the courage to touch our soul—our respected National Flag. “Impressed by his courageous call, many people gathered in the garden in the morning. The Government officials on seeing the crowds were shocked and did not have the courage to remove the National Flag and let it remain at its place.”<sup>47</sup>

The patriotic spirit of the youngmen also reflected in the composition of many inspiring songs during their revolutionary career; their contents manifested their faith in national regeneration. A few specimens from “Bismil” are quoted below:

We cared not, nor had the mettle too,  
When we launched ourselves into the valley of penury  
Though to a distance drew the love of Motherland to  
pat us.

No care for the self fashes into our minds but it occurs;  
Till how far the Motherland will lay in the siege of Decline;  
It torments to see our nation in that state,  
We long to die and vanish in the dust.

\*Text of the letter cited in *Rash Behari Basu : His Struggle for India's Independence* (Calcutta, 1963), p. 20.

<sup>47</sup> . Sushila Azad, “Heroic Martyrdom...”, *Blitz*, 16 July, 1960, p. 14, cols. 1-2.



Whose is the blood that flows at nation's altar,  
 Tell us O! Sky whose foe you are  
 Great it is when all do pledge  
 To sacrifice the lives for the Motherland  
 And don't be dissuaded if millions come to do it  
 And Damn be to your sermons, O! priest.

And in the same song the young revolutionaries were exhorted:

Rare is the chance, play the fire O! youth  
 And bag gladly the pangs that attend the service of nation  
 Give youth to Motherland, disposed to service,  
 Rare are these blessings of Motherland, avail them,  
 and let us see who comes to actuate Her wishes.<sup>48</sup>

There was also Ashfaqullah who composed poems reflecting the burning stir to get freedom. A specimen is also adjusted here:

कुछ मारजू नहीं है, है आरजू तो यह—  
 रख दे कोई जरा-सी खाके वतन कफ़न में  
 वतन हमेशा रहे शादकाम और आजाद,  
 हमारा क्या है, अगर हम रहे, रहे न रहे ॥<sup>49</sup>

Equally stirring was another song composed by one of the revolutionaries :

मां हमें विदा दो जाते हैं हम  
 विजय केतु फहराने आज,  
 तेरी बलिबेदी पर चढ़कर ।\*

48. Banarsi Das Chaturvedi, ed., *Ram Prasad "Bismil"* (Delhi, Atma Ram & Sons, 1958), pp. 147-48. For further study of such patriotic songs see Manmath Nath Gupta, n. 36, pp. 215-16.

49. Cited in *Swatantrata Sangram*, a golden jubilee publication by daily *Aaj* (Varanasi, Gyan Mandal Ltd., 1971), p. 87. Also see their other letters and poems, pp. 96-85.

\* Cited by Shankar Sultanpuri, *Krantikari Azad* (Delhi, Hindi Pocket Books, 1970, Fourth ed.), p. 1. See also p. 82.

**Creed of Violence and the Debate**

Inspired by ideal patriotism they decided to struggle against a politico-economic order which the revolutionaries had openly and emphatically denounced. They did not allow their thinking to be dominated by the considerations of *bourgeois* morality or otherwise of violent deeds. They did not believe that India would gain her freedom solely by peaceful means. They were convinced that sometimes in the coming years a violent conflict was bound to take place. Motivated with these injunctions Gopi Nath Saha had committed, as already stated, the murder of Mr. Day in Calcutta.

Moved by Saha's hanging many of his friends and sympathizers organized several public meetings and got resolutions passed appreciating his courageous spirit and attended the Bengal Provincial Conference held at Serajgunge in the summer of 1924. They moved a resolution extolling his patriotism and self-sacrifice. The resolution was to stir up a hornet's nest in the days to come. They also succeeded in persuading C.R. Das to support it. By this time C. R. Das had become aware of the popular existence of the revolutionary movement in his province and in one or two of his addresses he had taken the audience into confidence in regard to his knowledge of their activities.

However, the stand taken by C. R. Das at the Serajgunge Conference was disliked by Gandhiji who execrated the language and spirit of the resolution. On 27-29 June 1924 was held the meeting of the All-India Congress Committee at Ahmedabad. A resolution related to the condemnation of the murder by Gopi Nath Saha was moved. It regretted over the incident and offered its condolences to the deceased's family. It also declared the Saha's action a misguided love of country and disapproved emphatically all such political murders which were considered inconsistent with the Congress creed and its resolu-

tion of Non-violent Non-co-operation. It viewed the occurrence of such incidents as acts retarding progress towards *swaraj* and interfering with the preparations for civil Disobedience, which in the opinion of the AICC was capable of evoking the purest sacrifice but which could only be offered in a perfectly peaceful manner. Similarly, Pt. Motilal Nehru though at the time of voting he sided with Das, believed that violence could not avail them. Even if it brought them success it would be a success that would degrade them and made them less fit to enjoy the liberty thus gained.<sup>50</sup>

This move at the meeting excited much feeling. It led to the sharpening of controversy and open division among the Congressmen. In reality a royal battle took place. But Gandhiji was bent upon clearing the uncertainty. His attitude indicated that to check the dissenting note into the Congress ranks on the issue of violence he did not try to defend his position on the ideological grounds. But instead he threatened to resign if the tendency of appreciating violence by resolutions continued in the Congress Party. He wrote in *Young India* on 19 June 1924 that some discussion was inevitable if Congressmen were to know where they were. He was supposed to work wonders, lead the nation to its pre-destined goal. He, however, entertained no such hallucinations. But he did claim to be an "humble soldier". He added if the people would not make a fun of him he did not mind telling that he could act also like an efficient General on usual terms. But he must have obedient soldiers having a full faith in themselves and their General. His programme of action had never been clandestine, instead very definite. Certain well explained conditions being fulfilled, it guaranteed success. But he lamented what was a poor General to do when he found soldiers who subscribed to his conditions and yet did not carry them out in their own persons,

50. *Pandit Motilal Nehru Birth Centenary Souvenir* (New Delhi, Centenary Committee, 1961), p. 154.

and probably, did not believe in them. In firm tone Gandhiji added that "soldiers" were in the happy position of being electors of their own General. The would-be General must be aware of the conditions of employment. He personally adhered to his programme chalked out in 1920. Only his faith had increased with the years that had passed. If such was the case with his employers, he was their "body and soul". He had no faith in any other programme. He was, therefore, not available on any other conditions.

The resolution on Saha was passed by 78 in favour and 70 against.<sup>51</sup> It could not satisfy C. R. Das whose support to Serajgunge resolution was made the basis of vindictive criticism against him and his Swarajist Party. Das thought it his duty to protest against this malacious abuse and vulgar threats of political bullies and the best way he could protest was to insist on every word of the Serajgunge resolution.

Despite his success Gandhiji considered the passing of the resolution by a bare majority as his defeat. A clear majority would have pleased him more than a narrow majority. On 3 July in *Young India* he declared himself as "Defeated and Humbled".<sup>52</sup> The resolution clinched the issue. The speeches and the scenes he witnessed after, appeared to him a perfect "eye opener" which lighted the "darkness, though dimly as yet."<sup>53</sup>

Opposition by Gandhiji, however, made the belief and determination of the young revolutionaries more and more emphatic in the legitimacy of their creed. Justifying the necessity of violence a young revolutionary, Sachindra Nath Sanyal, wrote to Gandhiji in February 1925, "When this good for

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51. M. R. Jayakar, *The Story of My Life, 1922-1925* (Asia Publishing House 1959), Vol. II, p. 320.

52. *Young India*, 3 July 1924.

53. *Ibid.*

humanity will demand violence and bloodshed, India will not hesitate to shed blood just in the same way as a surgical operation necessitates the shedding of blood.”<sup>54</sup> A few years later Bhagwati Charan in the introduction of his proposed work to be written, *The History of the Revolutionary Movement*, also emphatically declared that rebellion was the “Birth Right of every slave nation.”<sup>55</sup> To those who called them misguided by committing violence, the revolutionaries replied : Was Guru Govind Singh a “misguided patriot” because he believed in warfare of noble cause ? What would they like to say and think about Washington, Garibaldi, Laffaite, Lenin, Mustafa Kamal Pasha, De Valera and Riza Khan ? Would they like to call Shivaji and Pratap and Ranjit Singh well meaning and sacrificing physicians who prescribed arsenic when they should have given fresh grape-juice ? Would they like to call Krishna Europeanized as he also believed in the “*Vinasha of Dushkritas*.” Force when aggressively used was violence and was, therefore, morally unjustified. But when it was caused in the furtherance of a legitimate cause, it had its moral justification. Elimination of force at all costs was utopian. The new movement of revolutionaries had marked the end of an era of utopian non-violence of whose futility the newly growing generations had been convinced beyond any reflection of doubt. Moreover, if English could be well-armed and well-organised, why should the Indians be not better armed and better organised still—Indians who were “saturated” with the high principles of spirituality and

54. *Young India* 1924-26, n. 3, p. 900. Besides Sanyal the other young revolutionary writer in correspondence with Gandhiji is supposed to be Manmath Nath Gupta. Their letters appeared in *Young India* on 12 February, 9 April and 7 May 1925 respectively. [Jogesh Chandra Chatterji, n. 1, p. 405. Also see Manmath Nath Gupta, “Gandhiji and the Revolutionaries during 1925”, M. B. ed., *The Mahatma* (People’s Publishing House, 1969), pp. 95 and 103].

55. Yashpal, n. 27, p. 129.

56. *Young India*, 1924-26, n. 3, p. 913.

who were not like the mercenaries of British Imperialistic Army that delighted in murder.<sup>57</sup>

These revolutionaries believed that terrorism by assassination was the only method of fighting left to the people, who were at war with an alien despotic regime able to command great armed forces. Against the latter it was impossible for the unarmed populace to take a stand. They also contended that the repressive measures of the alien regime had destroyed all hopes of political reform being gained without violence. Moreover, armed and conspired resistance against something "satanic and ignoble",<sup>58</sup> was infinitely more befitting for any nation, especially India, than the prevalence of "effortless and philosophical cowardice?"<sup>59</sup> What could be more inhuman and terrible, to let 330 million suffer, stagnate and perish, or a few thousands be killed? What would the Indians prefer to see, the slow death of a mass of 330 millions through sheer degeneration, or killing of a few hundreds which would bring to an end the degeneration of 330 millions. "Nothing else could free the country", analyzed some years later Ajoy Ghosh, the late Secretary-General of the Communist Party of India, but in those days an active participant in the U.P. group of revolutionaries, "from the group in which fear held it. When the stagnant calm was broken by a series of hammer blows delivered by us at selected points and on suitable occasions, against the most hated officials of the Government, and mass movement unleashed, we linked ourselves with that movement, acted as its armed detachment."<sup>60</sup> The revolutionaries wanted to produce such men in India who would not shrink from death whenever it might come in whatever form, would do the good

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57 Ibid, See also the statement of Bhagat Singh delivered in the Sessions Court on 6 June 1929 [Suresh, *Krantikari Bhagat Singh* (Delhi, 1971), p. 89].

58. Ibid.

59. Ibid, p. 910.

60 Ajoy Ghosh, *Bhagat Singh and His Comrades* (New Delhi, People's Publishing House, 1956), p. 4.

and die. They were not entering the villages to extort votes for councils and district boards, but their mission was to secure "co-martyr" for the country who would die and "a stone will not tell where his poor corpse lies."<sup>61</sup> They would like very much to set up an illustration of going down in human history as unknown, unhonoured, unsung, unlamented and unwept. Did not Mazzini emphasize that ideas of nationalism grew rapidly, when "nourished by the blood of martyrs?"<sup>62</sup> Did Gandhiji believe that those persons, "mad lovers" of their country who were ever ready to die for it and in whom the spirit of *Nishkama Karma* predominated, would betray their "Motherland" and secure privileges for the existing trifling life.<sup>63</sup> The revolutionaries, after all, were not actuated by avarice, rivalry, jealousy or enmity. They were inspired by a divine motive of devotion and service. They were not misguided but were what Christ said : "The Salt of the Earth."<sup>64</sup>

The revolutionaries continued to contend that their movement had achieved no mean progress in the moral advancement of the country. Their countrymen were miserably afraid of death and this revolutionary party once more made them realise the "grandeur and the beauty" that lay in dying for a good cause. They had once again demonstrated that death had a certain "charm" and was not always a dreadful thing. Was it wrong to say, 'जो बिजलियो की शाख में बना ले आशियाना, उसीकी है यह जिन्दगी, उसीका है जमाना।' <sup>65</sup> To die for one's own beliefs and convictions and in the consciousness that by so doing one was serving "God in the nation", to accept death or to risk one's life when there was every possibility of death for the cause which one honestly believed to be just and legitimate—

61 *Young India* 1924-26, n. 3, p. 910.

62. *Ibid*, p. 911.

63. Jag Pravesh Chandra, ed., *Gita the Mother*, a collection of writings (Lahore, Free India Publications, 1944), p. 173.

64. *Legislative Assembly Debates*, Vol. IV (1929), p. 808.

65. Cited by Sukh Dev Raj, n. 12, p. 1.

was this no moral elevation ? To remain firm to one's cherished ideal even in adversity and temporary failures—not to be swayed away by temporary excitements and the seemingly high doctrines of an alluring personality, not to be discouraged by long sentences of imprisonment with hard labour, to be true to one's own self for years together—was this tenacity of purpose and sturdiness in the character no index to true moral progress that India had achieved. And was this not the clear result of the revolutionary ideal?<sup>66</sup>

The charge against them of being terrorist had been challenged to be misfounded. The adherents of the movement believed that they on their part endeavoured to check the ever-going terrorism of the foreign domination by countering it with their spasmodic retributions. Viewed from this angle their activities could not be styled as terroristic, and to go the farthest, at the most called counter-terroristic. Their actions of human murder could not be separated from their ideal of national independence. They were drawing the attention of the people towards the prevailing emergency in India. Although there was no difference in killing a man and making the people die in thousands at the battlefield, yet nobody had called the commanders and fighting nations as traitors.<sup>67</sup> Further, to refute the allegations that their here-and-there violent activities were futile for the service of the nation the revolutionaries like Manmath Nath Gupta invariably quoted the words of Irish national Terence MacSwiney. The latter had said that if any person who alleged that an act of armed resistance—even if offered by ten persons armed with stones only, was premature, imprudent or dangerous, any and every such man should be spurned and spit at. He asserted that this must be marked that somewhere and by somebody a beginning must be made and that the first act of resistance was always and must be ever premature, imprudent

<sup>66</sup> *Young India* 1924-26, n. 3, p. 902.

<sup>67</sup>. Purport of the statement by Bhagat Singh in Second Lahore Conspiracy Case cited by Sukh Dev Raj, n. 12, pp. 69-70.



and dangerous.<sup>68</sup> Moreover, their movement was based on revolutionary ideals rather than on flimsy and monetary grievances. It was always due to some all-moving ideal for which many fought before which in the words of Mazzini, thrones tottered, crowns well destroyed and created, existing ideals were eliminated and new ideals emerged, and for the sake of which vast masses of people thought lightly of "shedding sacred human blood."<sup>69</sup>

68. Manmath Nath Gupta, n. 36, p. 125.

69. R. Sahagal, *Azadi ke Pervane* (Allahabad, Karmayogi Press, 1948), p. 12.

Likewise defending the use of bomb on Lord Hardinge in 1912 Lala Har Dayal had issued his famous *Yugantar Circular*. He had described it as the concentrated moral dynamite. Elucidating his standpoint he had remarked that when the strong and the cunning in the pride of their power paraded their glory before their helpless victims, when the rich and naughty set themselves on a pedestal and asked their slaves to fall down before them and worship them, when the wicked ones on the earth seemed exalted to the sky and nothing appeared to withstand their might, then in that dark hour, for the glory of humanity, came the bomb, which made the tyrant lie in dust. It told all the shivering slaves that he who sat enthroned as a God, was a mere man, like them. Then in that hour of shame, the bomb preached the "eternal" truth of human equality and sent proud superiors and viceroys from the palace and the *howdah* to the grave and the hospital. Then, in that tense moment when human nature was ashamed of itself, the bomb declared the vanity of power and pomp and redeemed people from their own baseness. That is why, the people instinctively honoured those who made war on inequality and injustice by any means—the pen, the sword, the gun, the strike, and last but not the least, bomb. Continuing his argument Har Dayal also said: "Where tyranny issues her proclamation, freedom must also do the same. No bomb at an 'Imperial' or 'Royal' procession is inopportune. It breaks the spell, it is an anti-dote to the hypnotism of power, which paralyses the people. It is the voice of the millions speaking a tongue that can understand. It is the esperanto of Revolution. [Cited by Dharmavira, n. 31, p. 177].

Likewise, to those who were talking of democratic, free and peaceful change in the British Empire Shyamaji Krishna Varma,  
(footnote contd.)

Replying to their contention Gandhiji wrote in *Young India* on 9 April 1925 that their sacrifice, nobility and like were not only a waste of energy, but being ignorant and misguided, they did and had done more harm to the nation than any other activity. For, the revolutionaries had retarded the progress of the country. Their "reckless disregard" of the lives of their enemies had produced repression that made those that did not participate in their warfare more cowardly than they were before. Armed conspiracies against something *satanic* was like matching *Satan* against *Satan*. He considered the revolutionary a "dangerous" patriot, who committed the evil and died. He had never called the revolutionaries "venomous reptiles",

(previous footnote contd.)

a leading Indian revolutionary in Europe, had told: "But what is the good of this pedantic parade? Nobody listens to an argument unless it is backed by force. You cannot argue with a robber: you must knock him down. Any courage is justifiable when fighting for liberty. England is the arch-robber and slaver of nations?" [Ibid, p. 274].

"It is fiction", said W.S. Blunt in *Secret History of the English Occupation of Egypt* "that England never yields to threats. My experience is that when England has her face well-slapped, she apologises and not before." [Ibid.] In his *Forty-four Months In Germany and Turkey* Lala Har Dayal put it very mildly when he said: "The world understands only the law of the mailed fist. In the colonies the Europeans are absolute masters of the native populations. They have weapons, organizations and scientific knowledge, and their will is law. The abuse of their giant strength is fraught with the most terrible consequences to the poor aborigines who are like children or sheep in the hands of men wielding irresistible power. They can manage a colony only as a meat-packing company manages its cattle farms. There is much cruelty, exploitation, suffering and injustice in all colonies." [Ibid, p. 275]. In coming to such conclusions Lala Har Dayal was very much influenced by Herbert Spencer who called the British a "socio-phagous" or society-eating nation for affording opportunities to the many who, in the East, placidly assumed that Indians existed for the benefit of Anglo-Indians. [Ibid, p. 276].

but he must refuse to fall into hysterics over their sacrifices, however great they might be.<sup>70</sup>

But the revolutionaries retorted by saying that there was “no fair play and no gentlemanliness” in the revolutionary struggle.<sup>71</sup>

On the other hand, Gandhiji believed that a revolutionary action was poison whose effect should be neutralised in all the manners accessible to humanity. He believed that India’s way was not Europe’s.<sup>72</sup> It was his firm conviction that the death on the gallows served the nation only when the victim was a “spotless lamb.”<sup>73</sup> Discarding violence the revolutionary should adopt the constructive programme laid down by the Indian National Congress.

Retorting Gandhiji on these views, a young revolutionary wrote that “a few spinners do not form the Indian nation.... The sons of Shivaji, Pratap and Ranjit can appreciate our sentiments with more readiness and depth than anything else.”<sup>74</sup> They had watched the constitutional agitators. They might not be dishonest; perhaps they were not, but they were foolish enough to believe in the empty “sham” of constitutional agitation and to imbibe faith in “lawful beggary and servitude”. The utter futility of agitation against Rowlatt Act, Indemnity Act and Turkish dismemberment, must have made them realize their error. Millions of Indians with their full eagerness were now in all earnestness for the way out to life and national freedom. But which was the way? The revolutionaries—particularly the

70. *Young India* 1924-26, n. 3, pp. 901, 908 and 912. See also Manmath Nath Gupta, n. 54, pp. 104-05.

71. *Legislative Assembly Debates*, vol. III (1928), p. 448.

72. *Young India* 1924-26, n. 3, pp. 906-07.

73. *Ibid*, p. 909.

74. *Ibid*, p. 910. The young revolutionary is supposed to be Manmat Nath Gupta. [Jogesh Chandra Chatterji, n. 1, p. 405].

Muslim revolutionaries had seen and watched the self-seeking Moulvis and leaders whose one end of life was "to win the smile of devilish blood-suckers now in power." They were the "beast of mankind, the vilest part of our community and the most detested pests of our country." The national salvation could only be attained by clearing off the way the mischief-making *ulemas* and *pandits* by murdering or otherwise doing away with them.<sup>75</sup>

In reply to such assertions of the revolutionaries Gandhiji advised them to spread out into the villages and try "to bring sunshine into the dark dungeons" of millions of their countrymen. That would be, in his view, worthier of their ambitions and love of the country than exciting an "unquenchable thirst for the blood" of foreign rulers.<sup>76</sup> A bloody revolution would not succeed in India. The masses would not respond. A movement in which masses had no active part could do no good to them. A successful bloody revolution could only mean further misery for them. For it would still be foreign rule for them. His non-violence, he observed, was the active non-violence of the strongest. But the revolutionaries said that it was true that they did not drag the mass just then in the field of struggle, because they knew that it was weak; but when the preparation was complete, they would call the people in the open field. Until then the revolutionaries were not ready to "drag unwilling souls into the valley of death."<sup>77</sup> The philosophy of non-violence given by Gandhiji to the people for acceptance was a philosophy arising out of despair. It was neither the spirit of *Kshama* of the Indian *rishis* nor that of *Ahimsa* of great Indian *yogins*. It was an imperfect physical mixture of Tolstoyism and Buddhism and not a chemical mixture of East and West, they held.

75. K. K. Datta, *History of the Freedom Movement in Bihar* (Patna, the Govt. of Bihar, 1957), Appendix III, p. 518.

76. *Young India* 1924-26, n. 3, p. 907.

77. Jag Pravesh Chander, n. 63, p. 174. Also See Manmath Nath Gupta, n. 54, pp. 96-97 and 100-02.

The views of the revolutionaries on the necessity of violence also got reflected in a leaflet "The Philosophy of Bomb" issued by the central body of the HSPRS which continued to engage in revolutionary activities after Bhagat Singh's arrest, under the leadership of Chander Shekhar Azad, Sushila Didi and Yashpal. This leaflet on the creed of violence was issued in reply to Gandhiji's denunciation of their violent attempt to blow up and destroy the Viceroy's special train a few miles away from New Delhi Railway Station on 23 December 1929. In the incident only the dining car could be blown and damaged to pieces. The Viceroy escaped uninjured. The revolutionaries decided to distribute the leaflet containing the declaration of their ideal on 26 January 1930 which was declared by the Congress to be celebrated as Independence Day all over the country. Gandhiji took this action of the revolutionaries to severe denunciation in *Young India* in an article entitled "Cult of the Bomb". In the "Philosophy of Bomb" was analyzed the creed of violence in the following terms :

What generally goes by the name of non-violence is in reality the theory of soul-force as applied to the attainment of personal and national rights through suffering and hoping thus to finally convert your opponent to your point of view. When a revolutionary believes certain things to be his right, he asks for them, pleads for them, argues for them, is willing to attain them with all the soul-force at his command, stands the greatest amount of suffering for them, is always prepared to make the highest sacrifice, efforts with all the physical force he is capable of. You may coin another word to describe his method but you cannot call it violence because that would constitute an outrage on the dictionary meaning of the word. *Satyagraha* is insistence upon truth. Why press for the acceptance of the truth by soul-force alone ? Why not add physical force to it ? While the revolutionaries stand for winning independence by all forces, physical as well as moral, at their com-

mand, the advocates of soul-force would like to ban the use of physical force. The question really, therefore, is not whether you will have violence or non-violence but whether you will have soul-force plus physical force or soul-force alone.

The new statement also referred to the debate at the Lahore Congress on Mahatmaji's resolution denouncing the revolutionaries and claimed that the nation entirely supported them. It stated :

Gandhiji fought tooth and nail for the resolution with the result that it was passed by a trifling majority in a house of 1,713. Was even this bare majority a result of honest political convictions ? Let us quote the opinion of Sarla Devi Chaudharani, who has been a devotee of the Congress all her life. She says : "I discovered in the course of my conversations with a good many of the Mahatma's followers that it was only their sense of personal loyalty to him that was keeping them back from an expression of their independent views and preventing them from voting against any resolution whatsoever that was fathered by Mahatmaji."

In the statement was also deplored the attitude of the many Congressmen who abused the revolutionaries as "cowards" and detailed their actions as "dastardly". Referring to the passing of the resolution by a very narrow majority of 8 votes the statement continued that it demonstrated beyond shadow of doubt the country was supporting the revolutionaries. In a way Gandhiji deserved their thanks for having brought the question up for discussion and thus having shown to the world at large that even the Congress—that stronghold of non-violence—was at least as much, if not more, with the revolutionaries as with him.

In the statement it was also declared that it was totally futile to change the "heart" of British Government. Every time

Gandhiji said to win the enemy through love. 'How many British rulers, they enquired, like Dyer, O'Dwyer, Reading and Irwin, he had been able to befriend? None. His claim to win the entire British Empire through this policy was a waste of time and energy and a futility of endeavour.<sup>78</sup> A year later Bhagat Singh himself had dealt with the question of violence in the statement before the Sessions Court in Lahore. He also took more or less similar stand.

This controversy showed that both the constitutionalists and revolutionaries had lost respect for each other. There appears to be no reason to believe that each team, if worked alternatively, would have required more than three alterations to attain national mission; it would perhaps not have required to go beyond the World War II. In reality, it might have

78. Text of the Statement cited by Yashpal, *Simhavalokan*, n. 14, pp. 143-45.

Let it be revealed that interesting developments took place when the debate on the related resolution was going on in the Congress *pandal*. When Dr Ansari stood up to second the resolution moved by Gandhiji, his first remark, that the freedom was never won by such outrages, raised a protest from certain sections in the *pandal*, while little red flags were waved from one enclosure along with shouts of protest. Likewise, when another speaker came to the platform to support the resolution, he was shouted down with cries of "Sit down and go back." A speaker namely, Mr. Raja, opposing official resolution declared that it was contrary to the anti-imperialist outlook of the Congress. What mattered to them whether the bomb hit the Viceroy or any other? Baba Gurdit Singh of "Komagata Maru" fame felt that by this resolution they were deceiving Englishmen and provoking young men to greater acts of violence. Even old men, he thought, did not dislike such outrages, but also did not like to see young men go to the gallows. Moreover, so long as the Lawrance and Outram statues showed the sword by which they won India, young men would be provoked to draw the sword. His remarks drew cheers from the Assembly.

[*India Quarterly Register*, July-Dec, 1929, Vol. II, pp. 299-300].

required short duration to attain success than the cult of non-violence. But it happened the other way round. The reality about these two wings of national struggle was that the shrewd persons were advocating for constitutionalism, the heroic persons for terrorism. There existed no close understanding, somewhat like an unspoken and unwritten agreement, bargain or contract, between these two groups of patriots, until the Mahatma introduced such doctrines that caused antagonism between them. Both the constitutionalists and the revolutionaries would, with time, have gone on intensifying their respective campaigns without abusing, condemning and criticizing each other and thus bewildering the enthusiastic supporters—not active yet but intending to be so in the near future—more and more persons would have been drawn into the sphere of their respective actions. A particular pattern of alteration would have left the sphere free to the constitutionalists for a certain period extending up to even a decade, during which they would have endeavoured to influence the entire mass of people, through their oratories, addresses and other parliamentary skilful techniques to work for national liberation. A stage would then be attained when and where the hampering of this cherished task would have become improbably intolerable. At this moment, the revolutionaries would become active in the sphere and operate for a year or two. With each such alteration the constitutionalists were bound to gain in experience and skill and active mass support, and the revolutionaries too would have been able to evolve new techniques of action towards organized and mass violence, during which murder would have played no role other than that of vengeance or limelighting a conflict. But this did not happen. Along with struggling against the common adversary both the wings also quarrelled, though only verbally, among themselves and thus weakening the force of their retaliation to the common enemy. This certainly retarded the process of national regeneration.



The forces opposing the revolutionaries failed to recognize that, however mistaken the revolutionaries might be, however wrong and futile their methods and however criminal and reprehensible their acts, the guiding ideal of their career was sacrifice for the achievement of political and economic liberation for their nation. A few concessions hither and thither could never placate the spirit of revolt which had caused a grave anxiety to the alien rulers. The spirit of revolt was closely associated with the desire of Indian people for freedom. The alien regime forgot that freedom struggle once begun is "bequeathed by bleeding sire to son." So long as this desire lasted—and it was bound to last till the realization of their national goal—most of the young idealists would adopt revolutionary means as the shortest route to their mission.

The importance that the revolutionary movement acquired during those days was a turning point in Indian politics. The dormancy and pessimism that prevailed all over the country after the suspension of the Non-Co-operation Movement and which the Congress politics had failed to eradicate, was once more broken. Its credit would certainly go to these young revolutionaries. Once more these people acquired reverence in the minds of the common people. After the agitations and demonstrations against the Rowlatt Act and the Non-Co-operation and the Khilafat movements it were these revolutionary activities which arrayed the Indian people in very large number in the movement for national liberation. The political forces were thus taken out of passivity and vacillation to revolutionary and uncompromising struggle for independence and violent, or non-violent, constitutional or non-constitutional, whatever be the technique, all popular elements combined into the radical movement against alien domination. By these actions, the revolutionaries believed, "India was awakening after many centuries of fitful slumber to honour her obligations to destiny."<sup>79</sup>

79. Comment by N.K. Bhartarya who worked as a liaison officer between Chander Shekhar Azad and Pt. Motilal Nehru, *Motilal Nehru Birth Centenary Souvenir*, n. 50, p. 153.

### Violence in Practice

All revolutionaries admitted that theft and dacoity were crimes because they violated the principle of the good of the society. But they believed in political dacoity as it was conceived to be entirely different from other dacoities. It was motivated, they said, with the virtue that was attached to the destruction of a small good for the sake of some higher good.

Motivated with these feelings the members of the revolutionary group in U.P. decided to loot the trains and places of the Government treasury, and even steal the money and jewellery from their own houses. Earlier, confidential attempts were also made to send Chandar Shekhar Azad to a Hindu sanctuary and to make him the disciple of its rich but ageing *Mahant*. Azad did likewise under party discipline and served the ailing *Mahant* very faithfully in the hope that the man would soon die and thereafter he (Azad) would become the sole owner of the sanctuary. But the old saint showed no symptoms of dying within the expected time. Disgusted, Azad left the sanctuary.

On the other hand, the collection of money was a dire necessity in order to purchase the arms smuggled in a ship from some foreign country. Left with no alternative Ram Prasad 'Bismil', along with a batch of 10 revolutionaries, managed to stop the train running from Saharanpur to Lucknow at a small station Kakori on 9 August 1925. Two persons standing at a little distance on either side of the train started firing empty rounds to prohibit the people from moving hither and thither. Others controlled and overpowered the guard and the engine driver. The third batch entered the compartment where the treasury box was lying. They broke open the iron safe, the cash was taken out and tied in 30 bags. With their booty the revolutionaries decamped safely. There happened to be 14 armed men and two more armed European army men in the train, but they dared not face these dare-devils.<sup>80</sup>

80. For further study see Sukh Dev Raj, n. 12, pp. 36-42 & J.C.  
(footnote continued.)

Next day the news was flashed by the dailies of the country. The looting of the Government treasury and dramatic escape of the revolutionaries stirred the common mass of the people. The prestige of the Government was undermined in their eyes. Ideas like "if they be united on a still larger scale, they could assault the enemy of their independence" began to get hold of them.

In offence of the Kakori case 36 people were arrested. Some of them turned to be approvers. Rest of them --- near about 21— were put on trial for declaring war against the King Emperor. Although the case opened with the incident related to train-looting at Kakori, the Government realized that the real cause behind the train action was very serious. It was an armed challenge to the alien domination of India by the dare-devil revolutionary young men, who did not believe in reformism but wanted to free India by an armed revolution. English were to be slain and turned out of India by force. The Government spent more than a million rupees to conduct the proceedings of the trial, though the amount looted was only five thousand rupees.<sup>81</sup> The Government appointed a defence lawyer, but the revolutionaries boycotted him. So throughout the eight months trial he was defending the two approvers and was drawing Rs. 65/- per day from the Government for a work he never did. In all 18 persons were punished under various provisions of the Cr. P. C. Two youngmen, Sachindra Nath

(previous footnote contd.)

Chatterji, n. 1, pp. 302-306 and *Swatantra Sangram*, n. 49, pp 90-93. Shankar Sultanpuri, *Krantikari Azad* (Delhi, Hindi Pocket Books, 1970, Fourth ed.), p. 54.

The members of the group had also committed earlier similar other political dacoities. Most significant among them were Bichpuri dacoity on 9 March 1923; the Bamrauli dacoity on 25 December 1924; Dwarka dacoity on 24 December 1925.

81. Chander Shekhar Shastri, n. 29, p. 319. Also see J.C. Chatterji, n. 1, pp. 302-306.

Bakshi and Chander Shekhar Azad, could not be arrested. Azad, the youngest among them, escaped to the forests in Jhansi and went underground. From that time onwards the police could not lay hand upon him.

The appointment of all-White Commission to enquire and report on the future constitutional reforms in India was greatly objected. There was all around boycott of the Commission. Manmohan Gupta, Markandeya and Harendra prepared a plan to blow up the train carrying the Commission. They started from Benaras for Bombay with some dynamite, bombs and pistols. Unfortunately the bomb exploded in the train near Manmad. The explosion was so loud that it was heard from a distance of 40 miles. So the plan misfired and one of the revolutionaries died on the spot.<sup>82</sup>

Another important manifestation of the revolutionary activities took place in 1928. The death of Lala Lajpat Rai by the lathi-blows of a police officer offended the feelings of young revolutionaries. To Bhagat Singh and his young colleagues this appeared a very outrageous insult to be left without taking revenge. It was the bounden duty of youngmen of India to efface it. To murder the Deputy Superintendent of Police, Saunders, who had himself attacked Lalaji with his *lathi*, seemed the only way to revenge the national humiliation. That is why they chalked out a secret plan. On 17 Decembere 1928 Saunders was shotdead. The participants in the plan were Raj Guru, Bhagat Singh and Chander Shekhar Azad who escaped after fulfilling the irmission. The next day there was found pasted on the walls in Lahore a red poster. In it was stated:

Awake cruel Government. Hindustan Socialist Republican Army had avenged the killing of Lala Lajpat Rai at the unworthy hands of an ordinary police official.

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82. Jogesh Chatterji, *Indian Revolutionaries in Conference*, n. 9 p, 27, Also see *Swatantra Sangram*, n. 49, p. 98,

In the poster it was stated further that now the world had seen that the Indian people were ever watchful of the interests of their country and no cost was too great for them to defend its honour. They regretted to have killed a person but he was part and parcel of that inhuman and unjust order which was to be destroyed. In him, an agent of British rule had been done away with. Shedding of human blood grieved them, but bloodshed at the altar of revolution was unavoidable.<sup>83</sup>

The next scene of the violent action was the Central Assembly on 8 April 1929. In the Assembly was being discussed the Trades Disputes Bill directed to curb the movement of the working class, and the Public Safety Bill. In March 1929 the alien regime had already arrested all those people who were later tried in the Meerut "Conspiracy" case. In India the people were seething with rage and indignation over Government's endeavours to get these Bills enacted into law. By exploding a bomb in the Assembly the members of HSPRS thought of giving a distinct expression to the popular indignation against the measure. On 8 April 1929, when the Viceroy's proclamation enacting the two Bills into laws, although they had been disapproved in the House, was to be announced in the Assembly, Bhagat Singh and B. K. Dutt threw two bombs just behind the Home Member's (Geroge Schuster's) bench.

An explosion took place and filled the Chamber with fumes. Shouting "Inquilab Zindabad", "Down with British Imperialism!", "Workers of the world unite!" both Bhagat Singh and B. K. Dutt scattered all over the Assembly floor a large number of leaflets. They did not run away from the Assembly and were arrested. The contents of these leaflets show that the revolutionaries demanded the redemption of

83. Yashpal, n. 14, p. 160. For further study see also Sukh Dev Raj n. 12, pp. 47-58. Also see Sukhsampati Rai Bhandari, *Bharatvarsh Ki Swatantrata Ka Itihas* (Ajmer, 1950), pp. 589-600 and *Swatantrata Sangram*, n. 49, pp. 102-4.

people's problems. They wanted justice. In the leaflets was stated :

"It takes a loud voice to make the deaf hear." With these immortal words uttered on a similar occasion by Valliant, a French anarchist martyr, do we strongly justify this action of ours....Without repeating the humiliating history of the past ten years of the working of the reforms and without mentioning the insults hurled down on the head of the Indian nation through this House—so-called Indian Parliament\* we see that this time again, while the people expecting some more crumbs of reforms from the Simon Commission are ever quarrelling over the distribution of the expected bones, the Government is thrusting upon us new repressive measures like the Public Safety and Trades Disputes Bill while reserving the Press Sedition Bill for the next session. The indiscriminate arrests of leaders working in the open clearly indicates whither the wind blows.<sup>84</sup>

\* Rediculing the Assembly in his famous historic statement delivered at the Delhi Sessions Court on 6 June 1929 Bhagat Singh had said: "The more we have thought, the more we have come this conclusion that the purpose of this institution(Assembly) is to demonstrate before the world the poverty and helplessness of Indians." He added that the institution had become a symbol of the repressive power of an irresponsible and dictatorial government. The national demands put forward by the people's representatives were repeatedly thrown into the waste paper basket. He charged that the solemn resolutions passed by this House were being insultingly crushed under the feet on the floor of this so-called Indian Assembly "Briefly speaking, in spite of honestly trying," he held, "we are not able to understand how the existence of such an institution can be considered legitimate—an institution, to sustain whose dignity the earnings produced by the hard toil and sweat of millions of Indians are being spent and yet which has been simply reduced to an empty drama and a treacherous conspiracy." [Cited by Suresh, *Krantikari Bhagat Singh* (Delhi, Hindi Pocket Books, 1971), p. 86].

84. Yashpal, n. 14, pp. 185-6. See also Sukh Dev Raj, n. 12, pp. 63-68 *Swatantrata Sangram*, n. 49, pp. 104-06.

In the view of the revolutionaries these were the extremely provocative circumstances which forced the members of the HSPRS to throw the bombs, in order to put a stop to this "humiliating price." The bureaucratic "exploiters" were free to do what they liked. But they must be brought before the public in their "naked form."<sup>85</sup> The revolutionaries also called upon the Members of the Assembly to go back to their respective constituencies and prepare the common man for the coming revolution. But the revolutionaries also expressed their sorrow over the occurrence of the violent deeds. The leaflet ended with the following peroration :

We are sorry to admit that we who attach so greatly a sanctity to human life, we who dream of a glorious future, when man will be enjoying perfect peace and full liberty, have been forced to shed human blood. But the sacrifice of the individuals at the altar of the great revolution that will bring freedom to all and end exploitation of man by man, rendering of some bloodshed is inevitable.<sup>86</sup>

At about this time another revolutionary action took place. A passenger train carrying official treasury was looted at Ahmadgarh station in the Punjab by a batch of revolutionaries led by Choudhary Sher Jang.<sup>87</sup>

### Freedom Struggle in Foreign Countries

After the abortive attempt of the Ghadar Party to arouse the Indian army to revolt against British rule Rash Behari Bose the chief leader, escaped to Japan to work there to the last days of his life for the Indian freedom. "My life is not mine," he told his Japanese mother-in-law, Mrs. Kokkoh Soma,

85. *Ibid*, p. 186.

86. *Ibid*, see also Sukh Dev Raj, n. 12, p. 67.

87. For further study see Sukh Dev Raj, n. 12, p. 85. Also see the *Memoirs of Sher Jung* published in *Mainstream*, December 1967.

“it is offered to my native country.”<sup>88</sup> He was able to escape from India by a strange coincidence. About that time a news appeared in the newspapers that the poet Tagore was leaving for Japan on a course of lectures. Availing of this publicity Rash Behari Bose booked for himself a ticket in the name of Thakur P. N. Tagore, assuming thereby that if at all he be questioned he would be able to satisfy the port authorities stating that he was a relative of the poet and was proceeding to Japan to make the preliminary arrangements of the poet’s tour. And no less wonderfully the scheme succeeded.<sup>89</sup> However this was not the first occasion when he befooled the police and intelligence bureau. Earlier, when the capital was shifted to Delhi, the Viceroy who was to inaugurate the new capital passed through Chandni Chowk in procession on 23 December 1912. A batch of young revolutionaries led by Rash Behari disguised in *sarees* and mingled in the crowd of women waiting on a roof near the Punjab National Bank. When the Viceroy in procession arrived near the sight, Rash Behari hurled the bomb at his *howdah*, injured the Viceroy, killed his attendant, put on a *burqa* and disappeared in the crowds. He was an excellent and daring performer. After the incident he coolly returned to Dehra Dun where he was employed as a clerk in the Department of Forests. He managed to call and address a public meeting wherein he ruthlessly criticized the bomb thrower. After some time when the Viceroy visited Dehra Dun, Rash Behari was among those who welcomed him as a loyal baboo. Afterwards he posed as a CID informer.<sup>90</sup>

Soon after, when the Delhi “Conspiracy” case began, his bona fides were disclosed by an approver. The police, there-

88. I. G. Ohsawa, *The Two Great Indians in Japan* (Calcutta, 1954), Appendix II, p. 88.

89. For further details see his *autobiography* included in *Swadhinata Ke Pujari* (Allahbad, 1948), pp. 67-91.

90. Hyder, “The Terrorists”, *Illustrated Weekly*, 4 July 1921, p. 13; see also Sukh Dev Raj, n. 12.



fore, was in search of him. But he was not in Dehra Dun. He was away home, Chandernagore (a French territory), on leave. On the expiry of leave he was coming back to Dehra Dun to join his office duties. He soon came to know that there was a reward of thousands of rupees for his arrest. He was a proclaimed offender. But on his part he was a daredevil. He left for Saharanpur to meet his companion Chatterji and stayed with him for a week. He required money to escape. Chatterji managed to collect some amount from his friends in the city. He also told Rash Behari that a poster, in which he was standing with one hand on a bicycle, had been pasted at the Railway station, together with the promised reward for his arrest. Just for fun's sake Rash Behari wanted to have a look at it. - He was mastermind at disguising himself. As a typical Pathan he went with Chatterji to the Railway station. He was much amused at the reproduction of his likeness. Then one evening he quickly slipped out and managed to get back to Chandernagore from where in April he was smuggled out to Japan. A couple of days after his departure, the persons of Intelligence Bureau visited Chatterji. They had learnt that Rash Behari was seen at the Railway station by some observers and wanted to know if Chatterji could assist them. Chatterji laughed the whole thing away and the Intelligence men left sadder but none the wiser.

Rash Behari founded the Indian Independence League of East Asia in 1937 in Japan. Thus he was not an individual but an institution from which emanated inspiration to the revolutionary movement. Though he accepted the Japanese citizenship after 1923, yet he took keen interest in Indian independence. It may be recalled that in India even after the Ahmedabad Congress some of the political leaders were continuing to think in terms of *Purna Swaraj*. Rash Behari Bose collaborated with such persons. On 21 September 1922, he wrote a letter to the editor of *Young India*, to whom he asked to let the Indian people know through the columns of his

paper if there was available single illustration in the entire world of a foreign rule kept up by the consent of the governed. For a free and full growth, complete freedom was absolutely necessary not only for human beings but also for animals and plants even. The domination of one by another was unnatural and repugnant to the "highest impulse" of human nature. "No part of earth can", he said, "consent to be governed by another people." It was an anomaly and except in English political literature this phraseology could not be traced anywhere else in the world. "There can be either freedom", he declared emphatically, "or the opposite of it—slavery. There is no midway. If you and other venerable leaders want real liberty for India, you must be prepared to sever all British connection and must announce to the effect." On the other hand, if the Congress worked not to exert for complete independence but to attempt to better Indians' lot within the Empire and to ensure her more human treatment at the hands of her "conqueror" by securing Home Rule, the Congress leaders should say so plainly. Let it be known to the Indian people that a desire to remain within the Empire on the basis of equal partnership, could not mean anything else than a desire to perpetuate India's "serfhood", he concluded.<sup>91</sup>

In order to strengthen the case of Indian freedom Rash Behari collected weapons and established close contact with Dr. Sun yat-Sen. He also organized the first meeting of All Asian peoples in Nagasaki on 1 August 1926. This meeting symbolized not only the boycott of the Second International as it was considered to be benefiting only the Western people, but it also manifested an attempt by Asian people to reassert their culture and civilization in no way considered to be inferior to that of the West. The new Union of Asian People aimed at the revitalization the faith in the dictum "Asia for Asians" and to unite all Asian people for it.

91. I. G. Ohsawa, n. 88, Appendix V, pp. 93-94.

During his stay in Japan Rash Behari Bosc also wrote some books on Independence Movement. Most prominent among them were *Panoramic Views of Asian Revolution*, *India Oppressed*, *Stories of Indian People*, *India in Revolution*, *India Crying*, *Tragic History of India*, *Speaking on India*, *Dawn of Independent India*, *Struggle for Independence* and *India for Indians*, etc.

While in San Francisco the Ghadar Party<sup>92</sup> led by Lala Har Dayal, Sohan Singh Bhakna, Kartar Singh Sarabha and others were preparing itself for the armed uprising in India, there were also revolutionary groups in London and Paris working for the same object. Then came the World War I. The revolutionaries living abroad who had worked for help from foreign countries saw their chance. The revolutionary groups from the U. S. A. and Paris simultaneously approached the German Government and got favourable response. Thus the Berlin Revolutionary Committee was formed. The new committee also approached the Turkish Government for help. Raja Mahendra Pratap also left India. He came to Berlin and on the advice of Berlin Committee left for Turkey. In Constantinople he along with Moulvi Barkatullah, established the Indo-German-Turkish Mission. This political body aimed at the liberation of India with the assistance of German and Turkish Governments and such other foreign governments as were sympathetic towards the cause of Indian independence.<sup>93</sup> From Turkey, both Raja Mahendra Pratap and Barkatullah went to Kabul where they met King Amanullah and established the *Azad Hind Sarkar* with Raja Mahendra Pratap as its President and Moulvi Barkatullah its Prime Minister. Later on Moulvi Ubedullah and Moulvi Muhammad Miyan Ansari also became the members of this political group. The young student revolutionaries living abroad had established other foreign connections too. They

92. For further study see Dharmavira, 31, pp. 180-219.

93. For further study see J. C. Chatterji, *Indian Revolutionaries in Conference*, n. 9, pp. 19-57; Dharmavira, 31, pp. 219-38,

brought the problem of Indian freedom on international scene. Dr. Sun Yat-Sen living in Japan helped the revolutionaries. On receiving a telegram from the Stockholm branch of the Berlin Committee Leon Trotsky took up Indian cause on the occasion of negotiating the Brest-Litovsk treaty and said that England must give the right of national self-determination to India, Egypt and Ireland. The most significant work of the Berlin Committee was to organize the deserting Indian soldiers in Mesopotamia into "National Corps". Later on the Committee also tried to organize the Indian soldiers who had surrendered at Kut-el-Amara, into a revolutionary army to be marched to India. The German Government promised to supply arms to Indian soldiers, but the Turkish Government did not show active interest due to the queer behaviour of the Turkish officials and the German Government finally dropped the idea by saying that it was beyond the range of practical politics, because of the successive failure on the part of the revolutionaries to pick up the arms from German ships and deliver them to the freedom fighters in India. In his book on Lala Har Dayal and his contemporary Dharmavira has supplied a detailed account on this tragedy. On the other hand, the Ameer of Afghanistan was also purchased by British gold. In the absence of any active support from the foreign governments the provisional government set up by Raja Mahendra Pratap was disbanded in 1919.<sup>94</sup>

In 1921, Raja Mahendra Pratap went to Russia and along with Maulana Barkatullah, Moulvi Rab, Mr. Acharya, Dalip Singh Gill and Ibrahim met Lenin. Among all the visitors Lenin showed special interest in his conversation with Ibrahim who was of a peasant origin in the Punjab. Later on Lenin arranged their travelling to Kabul where the Afghan

94. Facts cited by Bhupendra Nath Datta, an old revolutionary in his presidential address delivered at the Conference of Indian revolutionaries, n. 9, pp. 63-64.

Government was in hostility with the British Government. In 1925-26 Barkatullah went back to Berlin and started publishing a periodical *Al Islam*. In 1927 he participated in the anti-Imperialist Conference held in Brussels. In his speech he called upon all the oppressed people of the world to become united in order to eradicate the Imperialism from all over the world.<sup>95</sup>

But among all these revolutionaries it was the young M. N. Roy who, due to his intellectual superiority, could influence the Bolshevik leaders like Lenin more than anybody else. As the latter were greatly interested in the eradication of Western Imperialism from Asian countries they gave all possible help to M. N. Roy. He planned to raise, equip and train an army of liberation in Kabul. Using the frontier territories as the basis of operation and with the mercenary support of the tribesmen, the liberation army would march into India and occupy some territory where a civil government would be established as early as possible. The first proclamation of the revolutionary government would put a plan of social reform, to follow national Independence. It would call upon the people to rise in the rear of the enemy, so that the liberation army could march further and further into the country.<sup>96</sup> In this connection an Indian revolutionary propaganda centre was also established at Tashkent. The deserters from the British Indian army, Persian revolutionaries and Russian Communists were recruited into detachments of an irregular force and thus was founded an International Brigade of the Red Army to liberate India.<sup>97</sup> An Indian Military School was also founded

95. Statement cited by Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography* (London, The Bodley Head, 1956 ed.), p. 175.

96. For further details see "M. N. Roy's Memoirs" published in the *Radical Humanist* (Calcutta) Vol. XVIII, 14 March and 25 April 1954, pp. 122-24; 138-40, 198-99, and 210-11.

97. For further study see Ibid, 4 April 1954, p. 163; also see Vol. XVII, 22 November 1953, pp. 558-59.

at Tashkent for this purpose. At the opening ceremony the fervently Messianic speeches were delivered by the Bolsheviks. "The Indian comrades were warmly welcomed", writes M. N. Roy, in his memoirs, "as the representatives of great people groaning under colonial slavery and at last rising up in a mighty revolt against 'barbarous' British Imperialism. The Russian Bolsheviks...stood for the liberation of the colonial people."<sup>98</sup>

Besides the organization of the revolutionary programme to eradicate British rule in India M. N. Roy also wrote a number of booklets like *India in Transition* (1922), *India's Problems* (1924), and *What is to be done?* (1925). In the second booklet were comprehensively stated his views on the necessity of Indian Independence. The government which ruled in the interest of the foreign exploiting class, he stated, must be the object of the first onslaught, because that foreign domination had been the immediate cause of the backwardness of the Indian people. Colonial exploitation by Imperialist capital prevented normal economic development of the country and a backward state of economic development was not conducive to the growth of political consciousness of a people. Thus the British rule in India had been responsible for the "thwarting of the free-play of the forces of progress" that were inherent in every human society. If the very existence of the alien regime is threatened today it was not because the people of India had suddenly made up their mind to free themselves from alien "thralldom", but because the inexorable forces of progress inherent in the organism of the Indian society—the forces that had been temporarily "cramped" by the British domination among other agencies—were asserting themselves. The political aspect of the Indian movement, the desire for the national freedom and the enthusiasm to fight for *swaraj*, therefore, rested upon the background of the upheaval of these mighty forces.

98. *Ibid*, p. 222. For further details on the Military School, see also *Ibid* pp. 233-35.

The latter were the root cause of all that was happening in contemporary India. Their development determined the trend and consequences of the political struggle.<sup>99</sup>

Some time after his return to India in 1929 Roy was arrested on the charge of "conspiring to deprive the King of his sovereignty in India". Putting up his defence in the Sessions Court, Kanpur in 1932 he emphasized that revolutions were a historic necessity. From time to time surging forces of social progress reached phases of violent outbursts. That was caused by the resistance of the old order. An impending revolution produced its pioneers who forced events and heralded the maturing of the conflict. "The task of the revolutionary vanguard is", he added, "to expedite the historical process caused by objective necessity<sup>100</sup>.... They consciously organise the objective forces of revolution and lead them to victory. I have acted as a pioneer of the Indian revolution. But the revolution itself is not my intention. It grows out of the objective historical conditions of the country....I do not make any secret revolution which must take place in order to open up before the Indian masses road to liberty, progress and prosperity."<sup>101</sup> In his statement he also added that British Imperialism and not he, was responsible for the revolution. His punishment, therefore, would not stop the revolution. Imperialism had created its own "grave-digger", namely the objective forces of National Revolution. Those would continue operating till their historic task was accomplished. No law, however ruthless might be the sanction behind it, could suppress them.<sup>102</sup> The reading of such a profoundly stirring statement became unbearable to the

99. Passage quoted by M. N. Roy in his defence statement delivered in the Sessions Court of Kanpur in 1932. *The Radical Humanist* (Calcutta) 23 January 1955, Vol. XIX, p. 48, col. 1.

100. *Ibid*, p. 44, col. 2.

101. *Ibid*, p. 48, cols. 1-2.

102. *Ibid*, p. 49, col. 1.

Judge. He ended the trial by stating that he would not have "sedition" preached in his court and sentenced Roy to twelve years rigorous imprisonment.<sup>103</sup>

### **Secular Movement**

A significant aspect of the movement lay in the fact that it was, largely speaking, above sectarian and communal outlook. Unlike the former movements the religion was not allowed to have precedence over the secular and nationalistic outlook of its organizers who belonged to different religious groups in the country. Revolutionary brotherhood had reached a stage where there was no caste even religion, no untouchability or even separate identity.

To overcome the sectarian and socially prejudicial caste outlook and thereby to develop healthy secular nationalist feelings in the people the *Naujawan Bharat Sabha* used to arrange social gatherings. People belonging to all creeds, castes and sub-castes were invited to participate in the functions, to take their meals together served by the people from among themselves. On the occasion of one such gathering some over-enthusiastic youngmen cooked the *Halal* and *Jhataka* qualities of meat (either of which was considered repugnant or taboo by one community or another) in the same pot and served it to all the people present—Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims.<sup>104</sup>

To remove the communal feeling based on superstition and dogmatism the members of the *Sabha* also organized series of public lectures and discussed socio-political affairs. Much prominence was attached to inculcation of a spirit and interest in the superiority of the scientific materialism over the mystical metaphysics. Besides the Hindus, the prominent young Muslim participants and organizers of such activities were persons like

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103. *Ibid.*

104. Yashpal, *Simhavalokan*, Vol. I, n. 26, p. 100.



Fazal, Mansur and Ahsan Illahi. On the occasion of arranging these lectures the speakers particularly used to expose the drawbacks of their own respective religious creeds or castes. Besides, on the death of Moulana Barkatullah in a San Francisco hospital, revolutionary of every sect gathered to pay homage and at his funeral prayers and hymns were recited from Hindu, Muslim and Sikh religious scriptures.

Rajendra Nath Lahiri was out and out revolutionary and revolted against social prejudices. Though a Brahmin he threw away the sacred thread. He took pork and beef without the least hesitation. He was fully aware that social prejudices were great hindrances in the way of advancement and were to be broken off mercilessly. This was the real spirit of an ardent revolutionary.

Among these revolutionaries there was also Ashfaqullah Khan. He was a very close colleague of Ram Prasad 'Bismil' who was the leader of the revolutionary movement in the then United Provinces. On the occurrence of any Hindu-Muslim riot the Muslims in the neighbourhood used to abuse him openly as "*Kafir*". But he never cared for all this. He was an ardent believer in the growth of Hindu-Muslim unity. He was a true patriot. Besides Urdu he also studied Hindi in which most of the revolutionary literature in the United Provinces was available. He and 'Bismil' often used to eat their meal in the same plate. This strong faith in the Hindu-Muslim unity had liberalized the Arya Samaji views of even Ram Prasad 'Bismil'.

Due to his participation in Kakori case Ashfaqullah was arrested at Delhi on 8 December 1925. Syed Ainuddin, the Committing Magistrate, whom the revolutionaries considered a British stooge and an enemy of their country escorted him from Delhi to Lucknow in train. His main aim, as directed by his alien masters, was to prevail on Ashfaqullah as a Muslim and thus get all secrets of the movements from him. Similar

was the objective of Khan Bahadur Tasadduq Hussain, Deputy Superintendent of Police in the Imperial Intelligence, who tried his utmost to pour communal poison into the mind of this resolute revolutionary youth. Their plea was roughly: "You are a Muslim, we are also of the same faith. We, therefore, are sorry for you. Why should you spoil your valuable life by being faithful and true to the revolutionary party? Ram Prasad is a Hindu. His object is to establish Hindu Raj in place of the British one. You come from a good and enlightened Muslim family, why should you join hands with the *kafirs* and go against your own faith and against the interest of your community?" But all these arguments proved futile. Service to the nation had already been accepted by Ashfaq as a firm principle; he had already divested his mind of stupid and anti-national prejudices. He, therefore, said: "I am grateful for your good wishes but my ideas are unchangeable. Ram Prasad is not a Hindu to me; he is a Hindustani. Not Hindu freedom but Hindustan's freedom is his objective. Had he been inspired by Hindu freedom even then I would have joined hands with him. If I were to choose between Hindu masters and British masters and if my choice was limited to only these two alternatives, I would have chosen the Hindu masters as after all they would have been Indians."<sup>105</sup> Before this unflinching and firm patriotism, the arguments of the two officers disappeared into thin air and they had to retire baffled and humiliated.

Ashafaq was sentenced to death on 19 December 1927. His sacrifice was indescribable. At the time of his death he was altogether, as he disclosed to his counsel in a letter written from the condemned cell on 13 December 1927, satisfied and cheerful as it was a will of his Creator to see the end of his part. He was devoted to "Mother India".<sup>106</sup>

105. Cited by J. C. Chatterji, *In Search of Freedom*, n. 1, p. 389.

106. Text of the letter quoted by Kripa Shankar Hazela, his counsel, "Kakori Conspiracy Case", *Narmada*, April 1960, p. 13.

'Bismil' was so much impressed by unflinching dedication of his Muslim friend that he paid a glowing tribute to his martyrdom:

The Government has declared Ashfaqullah to be the right hand of Ram Prasad. In spite of being a dedicated Muslim if Ashfaq can become the right hand of a devoted Arya Samaji Ram Prasad to usher an armed revolution, then why not Hindus and Muslims can unite in the name of freedom leaving behind their minor personal trifles ...I have done my job. By picking up a youth from among the Muslims I have shown to whole of India that he passed successfully all the tests of secularism and patriotism. Nobody should dare to say now that Muslims are not to be trusted.... I pray to those of my countrymen who have been pained and saddened even to an inch, to take this lesson that Hindu, Muslim and all other political groups should assemble under the flag of the Congress.... Once they do it, the day is not far off when the British Government will have to yield to the demand of Indians to be free.<sup>107</sup>

Besides Ashfaq there were some other Muslim participants who exhorted their co-religionists to wage the struggle of national liberation. One such circular issued by their Central Revolutionary Committee said: "Great danger ahead. Rise up young Moslems. Your national star is up. Abide by its Command."<sup>108</sup> Young Muslims were also called upon to co-operate with revolutionaries of other communities in India. Besides, there were in Europe and America many Muslim revolutionaries equally active in the movement. They called upon the foreign governments to assist them. In the *Galibnama* was declared by the Muslim compatriots of the *Provisional Government* established under the leadership of Raja Mahendra Pratap:

107. *Swatantrata Sangram*, n. 49, p. 86.

108. *History of the Freedom Movement in Bihar* (Patna, 1957), Appendix III, p. 519.

The Muslims of Asia, Europe and Africa have together resolved to wage armed crusade.... Oh Mussalmans ! It devolves upon you to stand up against this tyrant Christian Government which has enslaved you. This mission warrants no delay. With sincere devotion forward to annihilate your foe. Demonstrate the feelings that you harbour against them.<sup>109</sup>

In the United States, the Ghadar Party used to publish a weekly journal called *Ghadar* (the Rebellion) with Lala Har Dayal as its chief editor. Many poems from *Ghadar* were reprinted in booklets of which four acquired great popularity. In one of them, *Ghadar di Goonj*, there appeared the following verses :

No Pundits or Mullahs do we need,  
 No prayers or litanies we need recite,  
 These will only scuttle our boat.  
 Draw the sword; 'tis time to fight .  
 Though Hindus, Mussalmans and Sikhs we be,  
 Sons of Bharat are we still.  
 Put aside your arguments for another day  
 Call of the hour is to kill.. .  
 Though born we were in one land  
 By caste we became high and low  
 These foolish factions we did create  
 And seeds of discord ourselves did we sow;  
 Some worship the cow; others swine abhor,  
 The white man eats them at every place;  
 Forget you are Hindu, forget you are Mussalman,  
 Pledge yourselves to your land and race.<sup>110</sup>

The Ghadar Movement was thus a purely secular movement which aimed to free India by armed revolution. Though the vast majority of the activists were Sikhs, and

109. Manmath Nath Gupta, n. 36, p. 179.

110. *Ghadar* (San Francisco), Vol. 1, Nos. 4, 17, and 23. For further study see the records in National Archives of India, New Delhi.

therefore, the meetings were organized in Sikh temples, it had nothing whatever to do with Sikhism as a religion. The movement attracted both Hindus and Muslims to its activities and later impressed upon other revolutionary groups in India to cast their communal bias aside.

In May 1914, the Punjab revolutionary leader Abu Syed had started publishing a journal named *Jehan-i-Islam*. With the help of the *Ghadarites* in San Francisco this journal was distributed among the Indian Muslims living<sup>1</sup> in Burma with a view to generate revolutionary fervour in them. In the November issue of the journal there was published the statement of Anwar Pasha of Egypt. It *inter alia* said :

Time has come to declare *ghadar* in India. Loot the arms depots of the British and kill them with those weapons. Indian population is thirty-two crores while the British are only two lakhs and they don't have their own soldiers at the moment. Very soon Turkey will close the Suez Canal. One who will sacrifice his life on the altar of Motherland, he will become immortal .

Hindus and Muslims of India ! You are the soldiers of the same army; you are two brothers; the unjust and irreligious English is the enemy of both of you. Declare a *jihad* against the English and become a *Gazi* (brave person). Unite with all your brothers and annihilate the notorious English and liberate your country from them.

### Socialist Character of the Movement

While the revolutionary movements in the pre-1919 phase were inspired by Mazzini and Garibaldi of Italy and the

\* Balbir Singh, "Krantikari Pathyakrama", *Mukri* (New Delhi), July 1972, p. 32.

middle class intelligentsia of the Sin Fin Movement in Ireland, the new movement organized by Sardar Bhagat Singh and others derived inspiration from the October Revolution and the socialist principles of the Soviet leaders like Lenin. Though the leaflet "Revolutionary" written by Sachindranath Sanyal and distributed in January 1925 had indicated the object of revolutionary movement to follow the ideals set up by the ancient *Rishis*, yet it simultaneously aimed at the establishment of a Soviet system like that of U.S.S.R. in India. Thus the concept of social justice that was based on religion in pre-1919 phase, was more and more acquiring socialist colour. The well-known slogans and code words like "*Bharat Mata Ki Jai*" and, '*Bande Matram*', "*Om*", "*Ram Hari*", "*Allaho Akbar*" and "*Sat Sri Akal*" were substituted by the "Long Live Revolution", or *Inquilab Zindabad*",<sup>111</sup> "Down with Imperialism" and "Long Live India, "Long Live Proletariat". A leaflet issued by *Naujawan Bharat Sabha* discarded Buddha and Christ and praised Karl Marx and Engels as the greatest men of the world.<sup>112</sup> While the old revolutionaries relied for inspiration on the *Bhagvad Gita*, the revolutionaries connected with HSPRS were seriously studying Marx's *Capital*. While the former revolutionaries relied on the writings of Aurobindo, Vivekananda and Bankim

111. It is quite interesting to know that when the editor of *Modern Review* tried to belittle the slogan by declaring its worthlessness, Bhagat Singh and B.K. Dutt were quite prompt to reply his charge. "The continuous use of the slogan has assigned it", they said, "a significant place in our history. The ideas working behind the slogan can't be separated. The slogan simply means to signify those unconquered sentiments and great ideals that inspired people to face hardships and offer sacrifices. May this kind of spirit and soul live for ever. We wish to keep alive the unparalleled sentiment of our ideal by raising this slogan. The slogan is sacred and respectable word in the eyes of revolutionaries. We use the slogan to introduce a better change and progress in our country." (*Mukti* (New Delhi), July 1972, pp. 26-27).

112. Sukh Dev Raj, n. 12, p. 27.

like *Anand Math*, the latter revolutionaries derived inspiration by studying Marx's *Dialectical Materialism*, Engel's *Origin of the Family and Private Property*. While Lala Har Dayal and his followers were thinking in terms of having sway over Afghanistan as a part of Indian Empire after independence imposing their cultural imperialism over the educated people of Afghanistan by awarding titles of *Shashtra-Visharad* (Master of Scriptures) *Vidya-Varidhi* (Sea of learning),<sup>114</sup> Bhagat Singh and his comrades were benefiting themselves by reading Lenin's *Imperialism, the highest stage of capitalism* and were dreaming to change the existing socio-political structure by drawing their guidelines from Lenin's masterpiece : *State and Revolution* and books like *Russ Ki Rajya Kranti*. They were keen to reply in a scientific manner the anxious query of humanity if there was a way out of the gloom and horror perpetrated by Imperialism and its local allies, into light and life for the masses. They had really located the ulcer in the body politics. A manifesto issued by the *Naujawan Sabha* forty-three years ago in 1929 exhorted the millions of youth to spend their valuable lives in villages like the Russian youth. They had to explain there the real meaning of the forthcoming revolution in India. Villagers were to be made understand and feel that the new revolution

113. In this connection a passage from M.N. Roy's *Memoirs* is worth quoting:

"Ananda Math was our common source of inspiration. Therein we found our revolutionary ideal. As a matter of fact, we had distributed among ourselves the roles of the prominent figures of that drama. They were sanyasis. We had taken the vow to follow in their footsteps. The imagination of establishing our Ananda Math somewhere in the upper reaches of the Brahmaputra valley, winning over the people with our ideals, arming them and then advancing further into the country at the head of an invincible army of liberation—made me feel that if mission succeeded, I would return to India not only with arms, but a new idea of revolution."

[M.N. Roy, "Memoirs" *Radical Humanist* (Calcutta), Vol. XVII, 17 May 1953, p. 234].

114. *Dharmavira*, n. 31, p. 58.

would not confine to merely changing the rulers. It would work for the establishment of a completely new socio-political order. It would, therefore, be a revolution of the people and by the people. In other words, it would be a *swaraj* for 98 per cent of people.<sup>115</sup>

Speaking in the Delhi Sessions Court (that tried him and B.K. Dutt for throwing bombs in the Assembly) on 6 June 1929 Bhagat Singh had delivered a historic statement. Defining the ideals and objectives of his movement he had said:

Revolution is not a culture of bomb and pistol. Our meaning of revolution is to change the present conditions which are based on injustice. Both the workers and producers are most essential elements of society, nevertheless the exploiters deprive the workers of their fundamental rights and fruits of their labour. On the one hand, the peasants who grow food for all, are dying of starvation; there are weavers who fill the world markets with the cloth woven by them, yet they can't procure clothes to wrap their own and their children's bodies; there are blacksmiths and carpenters who, in spite of constructing splendid buildings, themselves dwell in slums and die there; on the other hand, the capitalists, the exploiters and the social parasites who are sucking the society like leeches, are spending crores of rupees like water to fulfil their whims. These terrible inequalities and the artificial equalities of opportunities to grow and develop, are pushing the society towards anarchy. This situation cannot continue for ever. And it is clear that the present social structure is busy enjoying while sitting on a volcano, and we, like the ignorant children of exploiters, are standing on the brink of a dangerous abyss."

115. Full text of the Manifesto published in *Yuvakranti*, a bulletin issued by All-India Revolutionary Youth Front (New Delhi), July 1972, p. 10.



**He warned:**

If the structure of civilization is not saved, it will surely crumble and be doomed and destroyed; hence the need for a revolutionary change and the people who are feeling the necessity of such a change, have a duty to reorganize the society on socialist pattern. Unless it happens and man continues to exploit man, a nation another nation (and this can easily be called imperialism), all tall talk of freeing mankind from miseries and humiliations and inaugurating an era of universal peace is sheer hypocrisy.

**Defining revolution he added:**

By revolution we mean to establish ultimately a socialist order which will not have to confront such terribly aggressive dangers, and where will be recognized the sovereignty of the proletariat. Such an accomplishment will result in a world federation, being able to save the human race from the woe and destruction generated by the grip of capitalist and imperialist wars. Revolution is, therefore, the birth right of mankind and such a birth right of man cannot be allowed to be snatched away under any circumstances, whatsoever.<sup>116</sup>

In their message sent for the students from the Lahore Jail both Bhagat Singh and B.K. Dutt had exhorted them to deliver the message of a revolution that would culminate in independence and make the loot and exploitation of one man by another impossible, to the millions of workers in the factories and the poor living in slums, hutments and villages.<sup>117</sup>

116. Suresh, *Krantikari Bhagat Singh* (Delhi, Hind Pocket Books, 1971), pp. 91-92.

117. *Mukti*, a collection of documents related to HSPRS and writings and speeches by Bhagat Singh and others (Delhi, Mukti Prakashan, 1972), p. 25. See also S. P. Sen, ed. by, *Dictionary of National Biography* (Calcutta, 1972), pp. 155-56.

Elaborating his standpoint on revolution in a message sent from Lahore Jail on 2 February 1931 Bhagat Singh had said : "We want to overthrow the present structure of society. For this purpose we want to acquire the power first. At present the administrative machinery is in the hands of rich. We want to take the governmental machinery in our own hands so that we may defend the prerogatives of the public and may give a practical shape to our ideals i.e. may organize the social structure on the guidelines provided by Karl Marx. For this ideal we are fighting and educating and preparing the public."<sup>118</sup> Analyzing the objectives of the Congress he had added that the middle class was the leader of the struggle launched by that body. This class had limited objective. It wanted to achieve it by pressurizing the government with the help of capitalists and shopkeepers. But so far as the billions of peasants and workers were concerned, Congress could not redeem them. If they wanted to fight for the entire country rather than only for the middle class, the Congress would have to bring the peasants and workers to the forefront.<sup>119</sup>

While writing the *Foreword* of the *Dreamland*, a book by Lala Ram Saran Dass, a revolutionary of Ghadarite fame Bhagat Singh had clearly mentioned : "The society of the future or the socialist society, which we are going to build up, will have no place for charity trusts. Rather that society will have neither a poor nor a needy, and neither a charity distributor nor one who accepts it."<sup>120</sup> And this was the fundamental difference between the ideals of a revolutionary and those of the Congress. When the power was snatched from the hands of British rulers through political revolution, the revolutionaries would objectively attempt to transfer it to such hands whose destiny was Communism. Hence the need to organize

118. Ibid, p. 51.

119. Ibid, p. 50.

120. Ibid, p. 45.

the workers and peasants, because the replacement of Lord Reading or Irwin by Tej Bahadur Sapru or Purushottam Dass Thakur would not bring any change in the life of the poverty-stricken and downtrodden people.<sup>121</sup>

In the course of his association with the paper *Pratap* edited by Ganesh Shankar Vidhyarthi, Bhagat Singh often used to write about the mighty *Bijolia* Peasants' Movement in Rajasthan and the revolutionary mass actions by peasants and workers in various parts of the country. During his stay at Lahore Bhagat Singh managed the purchase of Soviet literature for the Dwarkadas Library in the city. For the first time *Naujawan Bharat Sabha* celebrated the "Soviet Friendship Week" in 1928. While in jail in 1930, Bhagat Singh and his comrades had organised Lenin Day and October Revolution anniversary celebrations.

Although Bhagat Singh had already read a lot on Marxism, he also continued its study in jail. J. N. Sanyal writes : "Bhagat Singh is a voracious reader and he has got a special command over the study of Socialism. He has thoroughly studied the Russian revolutionary movement from the early period of nineteenth century down to October Revolution of 1917. Generally, it is our belief that probably no one else knows more on the subject than him. He was greatly attracted and encouraged by the economic experiments carried out in Russia under Bolshevik administration."<sup>122</sup>

It is interesting to note that while in jail Bhagat Singh had written on 24 July 1930 to one of his friends, Jai Dev, to send from Dwarkadas Library of Lahore the following books to him :

121. Ibid, p. 52.

122. Balbir Singh, "Krantikari Pathyakram", *Mukti*, a collection of documents on HSPRS (New Delhi, Mukti Prakashan) July 1972, No. 2, p. 37.

1. *Soviets at Work*
2. *Collapse of Second International*
3. *Left-Wing Communism*
4. *Civil War in France*
5. *Land Revolution in Russia and Spy*
6. *Fields, Factories and Workers*
7. *Why Men Fight*
8. *Militarism*
9. *Theory of Historical Materialism*
10. *Peasants in Prosperity*.<sup>123</sup>

Bhagat Singh had himself written a number of books. Most prominent among them were : *Autobiography*, *On the Door of Death*, *What is Socialism ?* and *Revolutionary Movement in India*.<sup>124</sup> But they are not available today. It is said that Bhagat Singh's personal diary is with one of his relatives.

Besides Bhagat Singh, there were others like Bhagwati Charan Vohra, Sukhdev, Yashpal who had studied Socialism by Karl Marx and anarchist writings by Prince Kropotkin.<sup>125</sup>

Thus Bhagat Singh and others provided a socialistic character to the movement of national liberation. Instead of diverting their thinking to Hindu metaphysics accentuated in the name of goddess Kali by earlier Bengali revolutionaries, to the cult of Shivaji by Maharashtrians and both of them excluding Muslims from their ranks, the revolutionaries called for its superseding by the meaningful materialistic outlook. In this connection is worth quoting a few passages from an autobiographical sketch of Jogesh Chander Chatterji. Referring to his private conversations with Bhagat Singh at the Patkapur mess at Kanpur, he stated :

123. *Ibid*, p. 37.

124. *Ibid*, p. 38.

125. *Ibid*.

We used to talk and discuss for hours the general political life in the country, the form of revolution most suitable to the Indian conditions, different aspects of revolutions in other countries and particularly in Russia which was looked on by the entire world as a laboratory experiment and pilot project, so to say, for the new systems to be introduced after the great coming of world revolution. Bhagat Singh wanted to know what the Communists stood for. His inquisitiveness was insatiable....

It was the time when the Kanpur Bolshevik Conspiracy case trial was going on in the Sessions Court and it was a topic of discussion everywhere in the city....I also witnessed the trial in the court with the help of one of my intimate friends, Satya Bhakta. He...read widely books on Socialism ..I accompanied him to witness the proceedings of the trial. During the recess...he introduced me to all the accused.<sup>126</sup>

126. J. C. Chatterji, *In Search of Freedom*, n. 1, pp. 221-22.

It will not be irrelevant to detail here more about Satya Bhakta. His real name was Chakan Lal. He hailed from the former princely State of Bhartpur in Rajasthan. While still a schoolboy he had attracted police attention due to an explosion which occurred when he was experimenting with some chemicals. His early contacts were mostly with Hindi writers and journalists. He was an intimate of Radha Mohan Gokul, who edited Hindi weekly *Pranvir* from Nagpur. In the absence of the latter (Radha Mohan Gokul had been sent to jail by the alien rulers for nationalist activities), Satya Bhakta edited his paper for some time.

Satya Bhakta had come in touch with Mahatma Gandhi much earlier. He had met him first in the Kumbh Fair at Haridwar in 1916. He stayed at the Sabarmati Ashram between 1918-20, deserting it on account of his differences over the doctrine of non-violence. In 1923 he came to Kanpur and began to organize workers. He took a keen interest in Kanpur "Conspiracy" case and conducted a vigorous campaign in the Hindi press for the release of Communist leaders. He wrote in the *Pratap* (a Hindi daily edited by Ganesh

(Footnote continued)

At another place Jogesh Chatterji writes clearly about his contacts with M.N. Roy from whom he received four

(previous footnote contd.)

Shankar Vidhyarthi) of 20 July 1925 about the illness of Nalini Gupta. Moreover, through Narain Prasad Arora MLC, who was his close friend, he raised a question inquiring about the health and whereabouts of communist prisoners implicated in the Kanpur case, in the UP legislative council on 24 August 1925.

Watching the proceedings of Kanpur case Satya Bhakta came to the conclusion that to advocate communism was not in itself unlawful and that a communist party could exist without involving in the activities regarded by the British bureaucracy to be nefarious, dangerous and treasonable. He, therefore, started the Indian Communist Party on 1 September 1924. The birth of ICP was announced through the *Bande Matram* (an English daily of Calcutta) and *Pratap* of Kanpur and *Aaj* of Benaras. By June 1925 he claimed to have enrolled 250 members "from every province in the country". In the "future programme of the ICP" published in his name from Kanpur, Satya Bhakta asserted that his aim was "to establish the right of forming a Communist Party in India openly." This programme of the ICP was also published in the *Hindustan Times*, dated 28 June 1925 under the title "Communism in India, A Cawnpore Manifesto". The paper gave "No violence, if possible" as heading of section which dealt with the question of means.

In spite of this publicly proclaimed "open" and "peaceful" character, the Indian Communist Party of Satya Bhakta could not protect itself from the clutches of British bureaucracy. It is learnt from the *Leader* (Allahabad) dated 16 July 1925 about a police raid on the Kanpur office of the Party on 7 July. The police seized a number of books on Communism from the Socialist Bookshop run by Satya Bhakta. Earlier by a notification in the UP Gazette (11 October 1924) the Government had declared a leaflet *Bharatiya Samyavadi Dal* published by Satya Bhakta in Hindi as seditious literature and forfeited the publication. Satya Bhakta protested against this action of the Government in *Forward* dated 22 October 1924, and invited the bureaucracy to "declare the Communist Party unlawful in unflinching terms." He stated: "If it does so at all, I am the first and foremost member of that party to avow

(footnote continued.)

letters. Influenced thus he also studied Socialism and wished to implement its ideals after achieving national liberation.<sup>127</sup>

The *Hindustan Republican Association* (HPRS) which was the predecessor of *Hindustan Socialistic Republican Army* (HS-PRS) not only adhered to the theory of armed revolution, it also aimed at preaching and propagating the Communistic principles. At a conference of its Provincial Councils held on 3 October 1924, the HPRS adopted the principles of "Social Revolution and Communism" as a guide line. In a statement issued on the occasion was stated : "We aim to establish a Collective Republic. Only when the representatives of Indian people would administer this new Republic by themselves and with full freedom, only then there will be a collective construction. This Republic will fully rely on the right to elect and to end exploitation of man by man."<sup>128</sup> Later on this declaration came to be known as *Yellow Paper*. The *Association's* journal, the *Revolutionary* laid emphasis on nationalization of heavy industries and on the co-operative basis of small scale industries.<sup>129</sup>

On the eve of their hanging both Khudiram Bose and Kanhya Lal Dutt believed that they were sacrificing their lives on the altar of *Bharat Mata* and *Radha Mata*. Similar was the case of the *Kooka Revolt* and *Wahabi Bagavat* organized respectively by the Sikh and Muslim revolutionaries who wanted to eliminate

(previous footnote contd )

my unshakable allegiance to the principles and rules of the Communist Party. Let there be no mistake about it. I respect and preach these principles afid, if the Government takes up the challenge and proceeds against me, here I stand with my bare chest."

[For the facts cited above I am indebted to Devendra Kaushik and R.V Mitrokhin, "First Indian Communist Conference at Kanpur", *Mainstream* (New Delhi) Annual Number 1969, Vol. VII, pp. 67-68].

127, J.C. Chatterji, n. 1, pp. 341-42.

128. Ibid., pp. 238-39. See also Balbir Singh, n. 122, p. 34.

129. Cited by Balbir Singh, n. 122, p. 35.

a *malechh* or *Kafir* along with the *Fireenghi*. But the case of HS-PRS revolutionaries was quite different. With all their due obligation, reverence and sympathy to their predecessors, they had discarded this kind of sectarian approach.

During their trial on 21 January 1930 Bhagat Singh and his comrades appeared in the court wearing red scarves. Standing in the dock they sang some national verses and raised the following slogans : “Long live Social st Revolution”, “Long live the Communist International”, “Lenin’s name will never Die”, “Long Live People”, “Down with Imperialism”. Bhagat Singh then read the text of the telegram which he and his colleagues had handed over to the court clerk for despatching to the Third International. In the telegram besides other contents with socialist tinge there were also inserted the following sentences, “Proletariat will win. Capitalism will be defeated. Death to Imperialism.”<sup>130</sup>

Particularly Bhagat Singh had visualized the future when the struggle of national liberation would be brought to a successful culmination by the active participation of the working class and peasantry. This attitude is very well reflected in his letters and documents and particularly from the Manifesto of the *Naujawan Bharat Sabha* whose constitution was drafted by him and his close colleague Bhagwati Charan in 1925. The objectives of the *Sabha* were laid down as follows :

- (a) To establish a completely independent Republic of all-India workers and peasants;
- (b) To sympathize and help those economic, social and industrial movements which are opposed to communalism and are helpful in founding an ideal Republican State of Peasants and Workers;
- (c) To organize peasants and workers; and

130. Anand Gupta, ed., *India and Lenin; a collection of writings* (New Delhi, New Literature, 1960), p. 42,



- (d) To inculcate patriotic sentiments among the youths who can assist in founding such an ideal and indivisible republic of workers and peasants.<sup>131</sup>

To provide a socialistic impetus to the national struggle, M. N. Roy was alleged to have written a letter to the adherents of the movement : "Do not emasculate the Party with the banal and cowardly doctrine of bourgeois nationalism....Every little act of a real Communist is a blow to Imperialism."<sup>132</sup> In the famous statement "The philosophy of Bomb" issued in 1929 the revolutionaries had declared emphatically that the main object of their movement was to establish a new just social order by eliminating the existing capitalism and substituting it by a classless society. People were to be liberated from the alien as well as domestic exploitation and given the right of self-determination. This could be attained only by snatching the power from the exploiters and establishing the dictatorship of the proletariat.<sup>133</sup>

In the memoirs of his revolutionary career Ram Prasad 'Bismil' too emphasized though not elaborately, the ideal of a classless society. He expressed his ardent faith that every human being should possess the equality of opportunity. None should rule over others.<sup>134</sup>

In 1930 Azad and his comrade Yashpal met Jawaharlal Nehru at his residence in Allahabad at the time when negotiations were going on between the British Government and the Congress with a view to reaching a compromise. They wished

131. Cited by Suresh, *Krantilari Bhagat Singh*, n. 144, p. 45. See also Prithvi Singh Azad, "Sardar Bhagat Singh", S.P. Sen, ed. by, *Dictionary of National Biography* (Calcutta, Institute of Historical Studies, 1972), pp. 154-55.

132. *Legislative Assembly Debates*, 1928, Vol. III, p. 448.

133. Yashpal, Vol. II, n. 14, p. 144.

134. Banarsi Das & Thakur Desraj, ed. by, *Swami Keshavanand Abhinandan Granth*, n. 28, p. 219.

that the question of the freedom of the revolutionaries should also be considered at the compromise. He asked Nehru : "What are you going to do about us ? Are we going to remain underground always or should we hope one day for freedom ?" Would they still be considered and treated like the outlaws, followed by the police from place to place, with a price of many thousands of rupees on their heads, and with the prospect of gallows always before them ? Or was there a chance of their being permitted to adopt peaceful vocations ? Jawaharlal received Azad very cordially as he was very anxious to meet him. In the course of their talks the issue of Socialism also arose. Nehru questioned them closely : "There are many types of Socialism. To what type do you belong ?" As his friend, who was a graduate, was to answer, Azad replied that he believed in the precepts of Scientific Socialism. There could be differences in the procedure of applying them. But as the revolutionaries were attaching no importance to that problem immediately, after freedom they could decide about it. At present those who believed in the precepts of Karl Marx, could remain in their movement.<sup>135</sup>

Reiterating their convictions in a letter written on the eve of his hanging Sukhdev had written to Mahatma Gandhi that the object of revolutionaries was to establish the socialist democracy and this object admitted of no relaxations. He believed that the day was not far off when under the standard of revolutionaries the people would progressively

135. Suhila Azad, 'Heroic Martyrdom of Chander Shekhar Azad Blitz (Bombay), 16 July 1960, p, 14, cols. 2-3.

Admiring the Socialist convictions of Chander Shekhar Azad one of his revolutionary colleagues had remarked : "Azad's revolutionary career has become symbolic of the first steps of the poor, illiterate, oppressed Indian masses along the revolutionary path towards socialist equality, liberty and fraternity." [Prithvi Singh Azad, "Chander Shekhar Azad", *Dictionary of National Biography* (Calcutta, Institute of Historical Studies. 1972), p. 266].

“march” towards socialist democracy.<sup>136</sup> The revolutionaries and their sympathizers declared that without involving themselves in the “paper swarajya” manifestos the nationalist forces should directly aim at the villages. The singular way to end the communal enmity lay in taking up the village construction work and thus serving the poor peasantry indiscriminately. Similarly the organization of millions of factory-workers was required. “The age of proletariat and peasantry”, declared Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi, “has dawned. Hollow diplomacy will not serve. The future is of proletariat and organization which is devoid of their co-operation, will prove inefficient and incapable.”<sup>137</sup>

It were such socialist convictions that had prompted Chander Shekhar Azad, Sukhdev Raj and others to meet in Alfred Park, Allahabad, in February 1931. Azad was of the opinion that HSPRS had moved far ahead and that no purpose would be served by asking individuals to engage in armed action. The time had arrived to pass on to mass revolutionary actions culminating in a socialist revolution. To achieve that it was essential to make a thorough grasp of the techniques that were so successfully employed by the Bolsheviks in Russia. For this purpose, as regular members of the HSPRS, Prithvi Singh Azad and others were asked to go to Russia.<sup>138</sup> Likewise, during his underground Ashfaquallah was trying his best to go to Soviet Union.<sup>139</sup>

Learning from the shortcomings of their predecessors the revolutionaries of this period had begun to give a serious thought to the idea of class struggle. In a letter produced as evidence in the High Court of Allahabad in a revolutionary

136. The text of the letter has been quoted by Bhagwan Das Mahour, “Martyrdom of Bhagat Singh and his Colleagues”, *Narmada*, April 1960, p. 17.

137. Text of the Declaration inserted in *Narmada*, April 1960, p. 40.

138. Prithvi Singh Azad, “Chander Shekhar Azad”, n. 135, p. 265.

139. Balbir Singh, n. 122, p. 34.

case, it was laid down that mass action once begun must develop into organized agrarian strikes, food riots, the plunder of cornstocks and assaults upon large *Zamindaris* with a motive of confiscation of their lands. The “downtrodden” peasantry must be awakened to their right to live like human beings and the revolutionary propaganda should be motivated at making them understand that they should “conquer” these privileges by armed revolt. Such action rightly organized on a mass scale would arouse them from their centuries-old mental and spiritual servitude. Reactionary passivism at all cost be undermined. What burst out automatically at Gorakhpur, Rae Bareilly, Chauri Chaura, Malabar, Central India and what was happening in Punjab, must be inculcated and encouraged by every probable technique. In the peroration of the letter was stated : “Peasant revolts should spread like wild fire from one end of the country. We must formulate out programme to correspond to the economic interests of the masses, then go forward boldly with that programme till we reach our destiny.”<sup>140</sup>

In a letter written to one of his comrades the famous revolutionary Ashfaqullah had also planned to take up abode in a village, do cultivation with his own hands, spread propaganda on a wide scale, organize the peasants for rising against British Imperialism. He added : “I do not love my life so that I may hoard money and enjoy, but I want to live so that for the attainment of freedom for our country I may not care in the least even the greatest danger. [I care not] if the world calls me mad or insane. It is my belief and I shall live and die for it.... The

140. This letter is called “Assembly Letter”, because it was read out in the Indian Legislative Assembly on 10 September 1928. It was written by M. N. Roy as a Member of the Executive Committee of the Communist International in Moscow and it was despatched to Muzaffar Ahmad on 30 December 1927. [*Legislative Assembly Debates*, (New Delhi, 1928), Vol. II, p. 446].

lands of Nandia and Solepur are extending their hands towards us and their eyes full of love are gazing at us. The poor and the oppressed cultivators are ready to welcome us. So brother, do not disappoint these lands and dishearten these cultivators....Freedom of India depends on cultivators."<sup>141</sup>

Some of the revolutionaries who had migrated to Europe to achieve their objective, had also imbibed socialist ideas. Dr. Abinash Chandra Bhattacharya, who was closely associated with Virendra Chattopadhyaya at the time of negotiations with the German Government in Berlin in 1914, mentions some of the conditions put forward on behalf of the Indian revolutionaries :

If our revolution succeeds, we would like to establish a socialist and democratic administration and the Austro-German Powers should not in any way obstruct the same.

In India there are many powerful princes. If some of them seek to establish, either in India or in their states, a monarchy, the Austro-German Powers should not help them but should help us to establish a republic as desired by us.<sup>142</sup>

On 1 September 1928 the Sixth World Congress of the Communist International met and passed a thesis entitled the *Revolutionary Movement for the Colonies and Semi-Colonies*. It also referred to the establishment of the dictatorship of the proletariat and peasantry, consolidation of the hegemony of the proletariat, conquest of firm leading position among the toiling masses, etc. All such ideas also influenced the attitude of young revolutionaries.<sup>143</sup>

141. Text of the letter quoted by J. C. Chatterji, n. 1, pp. 380-82.

142. Abinash Chandra Bhattacharya, *Europe Bharatiya Biplaber Sadhana* ( Bengali ), Vol. 1, p. 146.

143. While all these revolutionary developments were taking place, the Communist International unfortunately took no account of the  
(footnote contd.)

It may also be recalled that quite substantial number of those who organized the *Ghadar* in 1914-17, later on formed nucleus of the leftist movement in the Punjab, whether of socialist, *kirti* or communist variety. It does not, however, mean that all the revolutionaries had become socialist-minded. Particularly disappointing was the stereotype Hindu-minded and mystical attitude of the old guards in Dacca *Anushilan Samiti* and Calcutta *Jugantar* party. In spite of serious efforts by Gopen Chakravarty and Praful Ganguli the two secret societies continued to adhere to the out-moded theories of individual terrorism and religious dogma.<sup>144</sup>

(previous footnote contd.)

actual situation in India. Partly the apathetic attitude of the Congress leadership towards the great labour strike of 1927-28 and partly the hostile attitude of British and Indian conservative and capitalist forces towards the Soviet Union in general and labour classes in particular led the Soviet leaders to view Indian developments in a characteristically biased fashion. Earlier, friendly attitude as reflected towards the freedom movement even for some time after the Fifth Comintern Congress held in 1924 was totally reversed on the eve of the Sixth Comintern Congress held in Sept., 1928. [For further Study see Zafar Imam, *Colonialism in East-West Relations* (New Delhi, Eastman Publications, 1969), pp. 199-206.

A few months before the Sixth World Congress of the Comintern, the journal *Novyi Vostok*, which had consistently held liberal views on Indian developments, provided a foretaste of all that was to take place in the forthcoming session of the Comintern. It brought out a long article sharply criticizing the Indian *bourgeoisie*. Its author pointed out that like Chiang Kai-Shek the Indian *bourgeoisie* had become frightened of the revolutionary upsurge of the masses, and had been forced to forge a united front with the Imperialist against the Indian proletariat. [Quoted in *Ibid.*, pp. 254-55]. In 1929 a Comintern publicist, P. Schubin called Jawaharlal Nehru as a person "who promises all the blessings of Socialism without a revolutionary struggle." [P. Schubin, "Problems of Revolutionary Movement in India", *Communist International*, May 1929, Vol. VI, p. 531].

144. J. C. Chatterji, n. 1, pp. 223-24.

It is true that by 1913 the ideas of Lala Har Dayal had taken a turn. Formerly an advocate of simplicity and purity in living like Buddha, he now favoured modern ways of social organization and industrial life for India. Through his public activities in San Francisco he became famous and drew the attention of radical groups active on the Pacific coast. By expressing his approach in articles "Indian Philosophy and Art in the West" and "The Wealth of Nation" (both published in *The Modern Review* in 1912) he appeared to behave like a genuine socialist. But let us not forget that it did not take Har Dayal a long time to retreat from his trial association with modernization. If his acquaintance with modern ideas paved the way for escaping from the narrow prejudices which made the atmosphere of convention oppressive to him they certainly did not prove of much help to shake off old Hindu emotions which were inculcated in his bone since youth and no mere trapping from without. So much so that after retirement from active politics he planned to write a book on Hindu nationalism. The real nationalism was termed by him as pseudo-nationalism which should be washed off from the minds of Hindu youths. He held Moghul rule in India as foreign. He believed that India was for the Hindus only.<sup>145</sup>

### Hardships and Persecutions

The urge of national liberation led most of the revolutionaries to face hardships. Success, they knew, was remote; but sufferings, insults and humiliations at the hands of the agents of foreign rulers were their constant companions. Nevertheless, by passing the test of misery and solitude and constant actions to snap the chains of bondage, most of them, if not all, made it clear that the Rubicon had been crossed. There was to be no going back or budging an inch. They clung fast to their ideal of national service. They never gave way to fear and nervousness. No weapon could slay them, no fire could burn

<sup>145</sup>. Dharmavira, n. 31, pp. 282-83.

them, thus they believed. They were prepared in mind and body to pass through the severest ordeal. They were the real *Karma yogis*. They reminded us of the history of medieval Rajputs and Sikhs who loved death like a bride. Recalling their martyrdom is something like new India recounting its red-letter days. In their nobler works people are moved with something like the emotion of life; and this emotion variously provokes. People are so moved when in Dostoievsky's *Despised And Rejected* the uncomplaining hero drains his cup of suffering and virtue. And so did the revolutionaries. In ultimate analysis one can safely say that, they could have sung with Nazrul Islam : "say, Hero, Say, 'My head is high, the Himalayan peaks bow their heads on seeing me'." But surely their humility could not permit them to do that. They took along with them others too, through "muddy, even bloody, waters". Theirs was the race of those who wrote the new era in blood. Theirs sacrifices had the Dadhichi touch. Like the fighters at Thermopylae, like the towering Prometheus unbound through thunder and blood they tried to capture the fire of freedom. Like Vir Abhimanyu they tried to break through the *chakrabyaho* of British imperialism. The young ladies among them took the vow to pass through the ordeal like thousands of Padminis who immolated themselves on the funeral pyres of their husbands.

Those who were exiled, encountered robbers as well as wild animals, crossed mountainous snow highways in Pamir, Persia and Tibet where there was not a single person to be seen. They also crossed the terrible deserts in Central Asia in the burning sun and stormy winds blowing and their companions scattered. Persons like Raja Mahendra Pratap spent their sleeping hours in the tomb made out of some dead traveller, hollowed as a result of eating away of the dead by desert animals and thus converted into a snake den containing many holes out of which big cobras appeared to attack their victims and they could escape only by their timely awakening.<sup>146</sup>

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146. Raja Mahendra Pratap, *Reflections of an Exile* (Lahore, Indian  
(footnote contd.,)



There were other revolutionaries like Rash Behari Bose who had hidden themselves in the old atelier of a baker in Tokyo for months together under a stormy climate when the British Embassy asked the Foreign Minister of Japan for the deportation of all Indian revolutionaries in Japan for violently attacking in their speeches British rule in India. On the other hand, the intelligence department of British Government was widely spread all over the world, especially in Europe. In it were employed not only British spies but Swiss, Italian, French, German and Asian too. There was nothing to prevent some of these over-zealous agents in detecting the revolutionaries, and sending false reports about them with the object of blackening their record. Special rewards amounting even up to Rs. 20,000/—<sup>147</sup> were offered through public notifications and newspapers for the arrest of absconding revolutionaries. Special posters detailing their background and character were pasted on thorough-fares, railway stations, post offices, cinema houses and other such places where people met in large numbers. Special detective ordinances like that of October 1924 empowered persons in authority to usurp the functions of courts of law and exercise wide and arbitrary powers. Anyone suspected of revolutionary leaning was in danger of being imprisoned without any definite charge or trial. Above all, most of the British Government spies appeared to have been saturated with a strange phobia of declaring the “gayband who trot about from Paris to Leningrad talking revolution and omitting blood and thunder in their utterances” as Bolshevik Agents; no matter even if many of them did not have an elementary knowledge of Marxism nor were associated with the Soviet Government in any way.

(previous footnote contd.)

Book Co., 1946), p. 32. See also “History Sheet of Nalini Das Gupta” inserted as an appendix in author’s *Peasants’ and Workers’ Movement in India* (New Delhi, People’s Publishing House, 1971).

147. Yashpal, *Simhavalokan* (Lucknow, Vipraya Karyalaya, 1953), Vol. III p. 20.

On other occasions persons like Raja Mahendra Pratap faced racial discrimination in the restaurants and hotels in the United States. Wherever they went they were told, "Sorry, we are all full up."<sup>148</sup> At last they could get accommodation in a hotel served by Negroes.

Besides the self-exiled revolutionaries there were others who had been sentenced to transportation for life to the Andamans popularly but apprehensively known in those days as *Kala Pani* (Black Waters), or barren tropical islands. The jail life there as well as elsewhere was unbearable.<sup>149</sup> The devices that the jail authorities were prone to concoct to persecute and to nozzle out life, were novel, treacherous, inhuman and unlimited. The jail appeared to be a mere factory for slave labour imparting the least minimum of good but intended to get maximum work. The slaves viz, the political prisoners, were not owned, but hired for a limited period. So there was no abiding interest in their health or morals, but the largest use was made of them and good conduct was ensured only for the master's purpose. The prisons, therefore, had created a "civilization" of their own. And in this "civilization" truths and laws in the validity of which we believed for centuries,

148. Raja Mahendra Pratap, n. 146, p. 102.

149. Referring to his entry into the Andamans Jail in 1910, V. D. Savarkar remarks : "The gate began to grate on its hinges; It opened, I went in, and it was shut behind me. I felt that I had entered the jaws of death.... The high wall of that mighty prison was adorned at the top with a festoon of manacles of every size and shape and worked into the form of hideous-looking flowers. Heavy shackles for the feet, iron bands for the arms, and several similar instruments for torture were hanging down from the wall, right in front of me. They had a grimness and beauty all their own, for they were befitting ornaments of the horrible dungeon I had entered into. The bayonets-the rifles-the shackles-the handcuffs-these were the proper lay-out of that hall of torture of that big ghastly prison " [V. D. Savarkar, *The Story of Transportation for Life* (Bombay, 1950), pp. 82-83].

were turned upside down. Good became Evil and Evil Good, and a stage came when both lost their identity with morass of bubbling pain, dehumanizing by choking. Anyone who, under the extreme conditions of prison life, managed to prove himself human was not necessarily the one who could also prove same outside, and the reverse roles were equally possible. Such darkness of emotional vacuum—a state of mind that disintegrated one's personality as effectively as death, was the usual feature of jail life.

Despite their democratic and liberal pronouncements the British regime left no device at their disposal untouched in torturing the young revolutionaries. Corporal punishment appeared to be treacherously prohibitive to the entertainment of an idea to reform the jail. In fact, there existed not the slightest idea of reforming along with the brutalities. But not only was reformation absent, it was almost an article of faith of all jail authorities that the convict was beyond moral redemption. No endeavour, however, was made to reach his higher feelings or his soul. Indeed nobody appeared to believe that any convict had higher feelings or soul at all. "The officials are typical", wrote C. Rajagopalachari from jail in 1921, "slave-drivers, the convicts are typical stakes." The consul of perfection and treatment of Mr. Barrie, the jailor at Andamans, to his wards was conspicuous of the general behaviour of the jail authorities to the political prisoners, especially revolutionaries. In fact, the transportation for life happened to be synonym for Mr. Barrie. Whenever the worst of prisoners showed the slightest spirit of displeasure or indulged in noisy mutual recrimination, the sepoy rebuked with the exclamation : Wait, you seem to be too proud of your devilry. But remember that once you face Barrie Baba, all this will at once disappear. You will shake and shiver before him like

150. C Rajagopalachari, *Jail Diary* ( Madras, Swaraj Printing Works, 1922 ), p. 19.

aspen leaves.”<sup>151</sup> Warning the first arrivals Mr. Barrie would say, they had revolted against the Government and so had been despatched to that place for the rest of life. No swindling would work there. If they obeyed silently they would pass good days. He would brag to ‘have set right notorious Indian dacoits and outlaws. He would accredit to himself: “I am the sovereign of jail, devil of devils and Demi-God of Port Blair.” You are bloody bastard, vagrants, wretches and the scum for society.” Using thus the choicest slangs he would storm out of their presence, shaking with rage.<sup>152</sup>

In the jail youngmen were forcibly engaged in odd duties with which they were traditionally unfamiliar. They were forced to skin the cocoanuts or picking oakum, spin ropes of the crude fibre and other raw materials of like character and grind the wheat or some other grain in the locally manufactured flour-machine. Again, it was not a question of a day or two. It was a prolonged agony of a life-time. To refuse to work meant added labour and increased agonies.

Confined to their closed cells prominent revolutionaries like Savarkar were yoked to the oil-press, which even two powerful bullocks could not go round easily, all the day through except for a short while when the doors were opened for supplying them meals. If in the meanwhile the prisoner attempted to wash or sun himself, the Indian *Jamadar* would lose his temper and use obscene language. No water was supplied for washing hands. For drinking water innumerable requests had to be made to the *Jamadar*. The waterman did not use to give water; if, however, he was given a little tobacco in bribe, well and good; if not he would complain to the authorities of jail that the prisoners wasted water which was serious offence. If

151. V. D Savarkar, n. 149, pp. 58-59.

152. Statement made by Mr. Barrie in the presence of Bhai Parmanand on his arrival at Cellular jail, ‘Life Struggle No. 3’, *Narmada* (April 1960), pp. 64-65. See also Savarkar, n. 149, pp. 125 & 135.

somebody complained about the waterman's behaviour to the *Jamadar*, he would shout, "only two cups are permitted. You have already gulped three. Wherefrom can I bring you more water? Will your father supply it?" Bathing could hardly be imagined unless it rained. In ordinary times, if permitted, the whole bath had to be finished in three pot-fulls of sea water.<sup>153</sup> The whole body would become sticky. The hair would become hard and stiffened.

The prisoners were also mishandled at the time of taking their meals. They were seated in a line in the hot noon-day sun or in drenching rain. None could sit out of line. To escape from the unfavourable weather the prisoners, as soon as the food was served in their respective plates, would hasten to go under a shelter from the sun and the rain, but the petty officer in charge abused them and Mr. Barrie proceeded against them for having broken the line. And the Superintendent would punish the offenders for encouraging disobedience among others of their number. Most astonishing was the fact that the prisoners were made to take their meal standing. Their clothes were wet with rain, their bodies shivered with cold and they held their plates in one hand and dined with another all the while standing, the drops of rain falling on the bread and rice in their plates.

After the supply of meals the doors would again be closed. Nobody bothered whether the prisoner had eaten his meal or not. The time given was very brief, and as soon as it was up, the Indian *Jamadar* standing outside the cell, brandishing his stick, knocking the plates out of their hands, would shout, "Time is up, Don't sit, The fix quota of the oil should be ready in any case by evening, otherwise you will be

153. Account rendered by V. D. Savarkar in "Majhi Janmthep"; Man-math Nath Gupta, *Sashtra Kranti-Chesta Ka Itihas*, n. 36, p. 221. See also Savarkar, n. 149, pp. 88, 111-13.

beaten and other punishments will also be given separately.”<sup>154</sup> Being afraid many of the prisoners put a morsal of food in their mouths, threw the remainder into the dust-bin and started yoking the oil press. There were only few who could press the oil up to 30 pounds, the fixed quota, by working throughout the day. Those who could not do it, they were caned, wall-roped, kicked and shoed.<sup>155</sup>

Mr. Barrie would bring his chair near the oil mill. While the mill creaked on till 8 or 9 p.m. he dozed in his chair, woke-up at intervals, his mouth full of abuse and cursing the labourers that they had not finished their day's work. “Woe be to them”, he would exclaim, “punish them now, cane them, *Jamadar*, within an inch of their lives; the scoundlers are idlers. They are slackers, no mercy on them.” And presently he would doze again and snore.<sup>156</sup>

For many of the revolutionaries the rule of foreigners was national slavery. They had, therefore, concentrated their energies to fight against it. But the dreadful conditions available in jail forced, for the first time, a realization on them that slavery did not consist of foreign subjugation only, it could also be perpetrated by their own countrymen. Sometimes

154. For further study on the sufferings of the revolutionary prisoners please see the following items inserted in the Index of Political Proceedings, Home Dept., Govt of India, 1929, p. 39:

(i) Kakori prisoners—Treatment in jail of S.N. Sanyal, a Kakori Prisoner—file No. 292.

(ii) Legal opinion of H. N. Sirkar, Advocate-General, Bengal, on the question of prosecuting Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru for a statement made by him in regard to the bomb outrage in the Legislative Assembly—file No. 229.

(iii) Kakori conspiracy case—Declaration of a hungerstrike by four prisoners. Petition from Kali Das Bakshi, father of S.N Bakshi, one of the four hunger-strikers, praying that the demands of these prisoners may be acceded to—file No. 288.

155. Savarkar, n. 149, pp. 113-14 and 207-08.

156. Ibid, p. 115.

they did it on behalf of the foreigners working for them as a "pack of hounds would work for the hunter"<sup>157</sup>, and sometimes of their own, exploiting a section of the people. And this truth, to an uninitiated mind was reflected in the behaviour of jail officials. Quite a large number of them were Indians. From the Superintendent down to the warden, they were the "sons of Mother India." And yet they treated their own countrymen, the prisoners under their charge, as alien slaves, perpetrating on them the types of horror of which even the most deprived of the slave drivers would feel ashamed. "This realization dazed my mind", thus writes Sher Jung, a prominent revolutionary who led the batch to loot the train at Ahmadgarh and sentenced to life imprisonment.<sup>158</sup>

When the revolutionaries belonging to intellectual professions, were yoked to the oil press, they soon fell ill; but they were not considered ill until the temperature had crossed 101°. Neither were they sent to the hospital nor relieved of their work. If, however, the prisoner suffered with headache or other concealed disease which defied perceptible diagnosis as a result of this work, he found himself totally helpless. The jail doctor was very much afraid of the jailor. Even for showing sympathy towards the prisoner he was threatened with the dismissal from his job.<sup>159</sup>

One particular illustration of this hard life is worth quoting. Indu Bhushan Roy, one of the Bengali revolutionaries convicted of guilt in Maniktola Bomb case at Andamans, was assigned the work of skinning the "Rambash" plant which had seriously injured his fingers, covered his cracked

157. Comment by Sher Jung, "A murderer with a difference" Prison memoirs of the author, *Mainstream*, 13 December 1969, p. 26, col. 2.

158. Ibid, cols 2-2.

159. Manmath Nath Gupta, n. 36, p. 278; Savarkar, n. 149, pp. 117-19, & 130-31.

hands with blisters and blood oozing out from them, so much so that he could not take his meal. Even the touch of objects anguished him and he cried in torment. The acute pain did not let him have a wink of sleep in the night. He petitioned the jailor that he would die of hunger, and so his duty be altered and sent to hospital for some time so that his injuries could be cured. The jailor shrieked, "you will have to obey me." After a pause he consented to change his duty and ordered the warden to yoke him to the oil-press from the next morning. Indu Bhushan Roy was frightened by the jailor's verdict and pleaded that if he was made to work with his bleeding fingers he would die. The jailor remained unmoved and abused him. Unable to bear this torture Indu Bhushan Roy took to the last resort of escape by hanging himself in his isolatory cell. After some hours he was found dead. To save himself from the wrath of higher officials Mr. Barrie deposed that the practice of *Yoga* had made Indu Bhushan insane and in a fit of bad effect upon the brain he killed himself.<sup>160</sup>

Equally hair-raising was the treatment meted out to another young man. Ullaskar Dutt was also convicted in Manikola Bomb case. The magistrate who sentenced him praised the convict as follows : "Ullaskar is one of the noblest boys I have ever seen, but he is too idealistic." On his release after thirteen years of hard labour he wrote memoirs of his horrifying experience during incarceration. His version runs : "I was yoked to the oil-mill similar to those we see in India for crushing oil from cocoanut and sesame... Even the bullock cannot turn out more than 16 lbs of mustard seed oil during the day. In the Andaman jail men were yoked to the handle of turning wheel instead of bullocks," and it was imposed upon them to yield by their hard day's work, 80 lbs of cocoanut oil. The prisoners were yoked to the handle....We were made to run round the oil mill like the beast which could plod

160. *The Modern Review* (Calcutta) August 1912, p. 217. See also the account rendered by Savarkar, n. 149, pp. 214-19.



on slowly....If any one of us was found to slacken his pace, the *Jamadar* was in attendance to belabour him with his big stick. If that bludgeoning did not hasten the pace, there was another way of compelling him to do so. He was tied hand and foot to the handle of the turning wheel and others were ordered to run at full speed. Then the poor man was dragged along the ground like a man tied to the chariot wheel. His body was scratched all over and blood came out of it. His head was knocked on the floor and was bruised. I have seen with my own eyes the effect of this mode of getting work done. What man can make of man ?”

Thus Ullaskar was tied down to this sweating toil for years together without respite and change of work. On refusing to do this bone-breaking labour Mr. Barrie would order that his hands should be enchained and he should be suspended by them in his own cell for a week continuously. Straightening by this process had made Ullaskar go mad. “The brain and the body ..had suddenly gone”, recalls Savarkar, “to pieces. Already he was so weakened in mind that he would easily pass into delirium tremens. He saw hallucinations and visions. The brain was out of the gear and the body was out of the joint....The whole night he sent piercing cries of pain that rent the whole building around him....The morning came, and what did we find ? We found that the cries had grown more frequent and harsher in sound, Ama-Ama (mother-mother) was the sound we heard repeatedly.”<sup>161</sup> At last Ullaskar was sent to the lunatic asylum where he had his fits, convulsions and lockjaws. He stayed there for a total period of 12 to 14 years.

Other kind of methods were also adopted to break the spirit of the revolutionaries and completely demoralize them. They were forced to stand continuously on legs with their hands rotating round the ankles, touched to their ears. Some

161. Savarkar, n. 149, pp. 223-24.

of them were forcibly kept standing on the big ice-slabs or dipped in the unbearably cold water; the buckets of human excreta were poured over their naked bodies. To extract submission from Yogesh Chandra Chatterji the police authorities showered his head in the commode and sprayed urine on his entire body and kept him unbathed for two days. In another jail the authorities degraded themselves to stop the functioning of excretory organs which often resulted in torment and long illness. There were still others who were continually whipped till they fell unconscious, tortured by such severe injuries. Those who wore such a crown of thorns, had not been spared for jibes and jokes by other notorious criminals rotting in jail.

Barbarous punishment were inflicted on the arrested to extort confession or to convert as approvers. For instance, their hands were kept under the legs of the cot and the police constables sat on it. Sometimes they were wrapped with a blanket and were mercilessly beaten to avoid legal complications. Sometimes they were made to stand on their legs for days together with their hands tied by a chain nailed in the wall.<sup>162</sup> On other times they had to wear cross bars which were worse than bar fetters because the prisoners under this sentence could not bring their feet or legs close to each other and they had to walk, sit, work, and sleep with stretched out feet and legs for weeks. But the bar fetters were worse than chains. Because the bars being stiff the prisoner could not bend his legs throughout the period which might extend for months; on such occasions the unbending bars were riveted to his feet and hung up to his waist.<sup>163</sup> All these various forms of tortures were described in a picturesque manner by Savarkar :

Chains perpendicularly tying up hands  
At the one end and feet at the other,

162. See the illustrations in Savarkar, n. 149, pp. 32, 140, 144, 402 and 482.

163. See the illustration in Ibid, p. 514,

Chains on hands and feet separately;

Chains on the arms; a solitary confinement on end.<sup>164</sup>

The revolutionaries were released from those various kinds of fetters for only an hour in the whole day to take their meals and attend the call of nature. When their ankles swelled like thighs, they resorted to hunger strike. In this process they also came to faint. Still they were not spared. The constables continued to kick them while they lay flat and started messaging them with hot oil so as to bring them back to consciousness and renew their attempts to extort confessions. There were still other ingenious methods of punishments. Their moustaches were pulled; pieces of *Gur* full of ants were laid down their *Payjamas* with the bottom tied to their legs and their hands tied to the nail on the wall. Yet the forms of punishment did not exhaust there. To hang them by their feet, beating them blue, to drive pins through their nails and so on. On other occasions their mothers, sisters and wives were produced naked before the revolutionaries and threatened with rape.

As for their bed, a very rough improvised mat six feet by and two two black rough blankets were provided ; and an iron vessel generally used in Northern India for animals, served for drinking water. At breakfast they were given two *Chataks* of half-boiled gram and at both lunch and dinner five or six big breads and *dal* in the iron vessel called *tasla*. The quantity of this treatment in no way matched with the amenities provided to the European prisoners.<sup>165</sup>

164. Ibid, p. 393.

165. In his statment delivered in the Assembly on 14 September 1929 M.R. Jayakar quoted the following menu of the Sunday and week day diet of European and Indian prisoners:

*European prisoners*

*Chota Hazri*

*Breakfast*

*Dinner*

Sun- one cup tea,      One plate dal and rice.      \* Three meat cutlets

(footnote contd, )

Some of the revolutionaries were also kept in underground cells where the sun's rays could not reach and days were

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day	three slices of bread and butter	a slice of bread with jagree	vegetables, one loaf, one cup of tea
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Mon-day	One cup tea, three slices bread & butter	One plate dal and rice, three slices of bread with jagree	One plate mutton curry, one loaf, one cup of tea.
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And so it goes on inclusive of Irish stew on some week days. Now coming to Indians you will find that their diet is chapatis 14 chataks; dal, one chatak; vegetables three chataks; oil, chillies and salt.

Referring to the clothing of a European prisoner, he added that he got:

In Summer—2 coats, 2 pants, 2 garha shirts, 1 mattress, 1 pillow, 1 pith helmet, 1 blanket, 2 pairs white socks and so on. Then there are nearly 20 articles for the winter of a better character.

On the other hand the Indian's clothe is one *Kurta*; one *langot* (laughter) one *jangiah*, one cap *tikoni*, one towel and one blanket.

In Winter two blankets and one coat, whatever that may mean.

Furniture for Indians: one *moonj* matting, two earthen pots for answering the calls of nature in a corner of the same cell. (Cries of shame, shame!')

In his statement he also said:

Look at the cells for Europeans and their furniture: Europeans are kept in separate cells. These cells have verandahs on both sides, which even my hotel here has not got (laughter). The sanitary arrangements are not adequate in a cell proper where the prisoner sleeps and works. It has a cot, one water stand, two small tables, one jug of water and one alone fibre matting, besides the articles of bedding mentioned in list E and one lamp or lantern for reading. On our visits to jail we saw these things with our own eyes inside cells occupied by Europeans.

The Indian prisoners generally sleep in Association Barracks. They are allowed only two blankets and one *moonj* matting and sleep on raised platforms arranged in straight lines. When lacked

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very much like night. These cells were nothing but the "graves of ailvet." The confinement to such cells went on for not a day or two but for months and years. Pandit Parmanand was confined to this restriction for years together.

Among the revolutionary prisoners those who tried to escape were

cooped up in a solitary cell of the infectious ward.... There were lepers around, syphilitics with rotting limbs, TB patients in an advanced stage, and a fair sprinkling of young boys suffering from condyloma. It was a nauseating stench of decomposed flesh, open wounds, running pus, clothed blood and putrid phlegm that pervaded around, over-powering the normal reek of the prison emanating from filth, squalor and unwashed human bodies herded together.<sup>166</sup>

Somehow or the other if the prisoner was lucky enough to save himself from this dungeon hell, and thereby escape from the dull monotony of this daily life, he was bruised and beaten so much so that he practically turned out to be half-dead. In that miserable situation he was brought in shackled, handcuffed, roped or cross bar fettered condition and was trussed up in a solitary cell. A chain, anchored outside to a stake, was threaded through the bars of the cell and was riveted to the ring of his

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in cells two earthen pots are placed close to them on the ground for the purpose of answering the calls of nature. The cell contains nothing else but one matting and even that cannot be used during the day time.

Referring to this galling and disgusting racial discrimination another revolutionary wrote from jail to Pt. Madan Mohan Malaviya a long letter.

[See *Legislative Assembly Debates*, Vol. IV (1920), pp. 795-96 and 808. See also V. D. Savarkar, n. 149, pp. 23-27 & 202-06].

166. Sher Jung, "A Murderer with a Difference" prison memoirs of the author, *Mainstream* (New Delhi) 22 November 1969, p. 31.

leg fetters. Every two hours the sentry would tug at this chain, supposedly to make sure of prisoner's presence but actually to punish him for his "indiscretions". In addition, there was also "teaching of a lesson." Every morning, as if it were essential for his health, the lesson was driven home with the help of battons and whips till he fainted. And the authorities indulged in this "health-promoting ritual" for days together.<sup>167</sup>

Such prolonged ill-treatment and semi-starvation invariably began to tell on prisoner's health and he was sick of constant temperature. In addition, he developed a cough that would rake his lungs. He remembered all those times that had passed by uncomprehended leaving him alone on the unknown path, full of dust and thorns. The world, covered by a dense of fanciful shibboleths, arrogated codes and sham morality was hidden from his eyes. Justice paid its visitation to the prison and remained dark for all those oppressors who practised mainly in its negation. The effect that such conditions produced on the mind of a young prisoner, has been very well detailed by Sher Jung :

Like lava in an unempted volcano, it smouldered deep in my heart smelting all that was there into a single mass burning desire, the desire to live for the sake of revenge. No serpent, after moulting its skin, could have revived in a restless urge to bite as did my spirits when, with kicks, slaps and blows, the Jailor played my ego.... I was bent upon wrecking vengeance on the authorities.<sup>168</sup>

There was no end to the horrors in jail life. One who acted as a messenger for the revolutionaries kept in various isolated cells in the Multan Jail, was ordered to be belaboured indiscriminately by the chief jailor who was a notorious bully of the Punjab prisons, and who always boasted that his mere

<sup>167</sup> *Ibid*, 23 December 1967, p. 21, col. 2.

<sup>168</sup> *Ibid*, 30 December 1967, pp. 29-30, col. 1.

sight was enough to make the prisoner tremble with fright ; and he was mighty proud of this inhuman achievement of his. On his instruction the warders plucked hair, writes Sher Jung, from the delicate parts of the messenger, burned matchsticks in his nostrils, broke some of his teeth, tore out nails from his fingers and toes, shoved battons into his anus, wrenched his genitals and finally crushed to pulp both of his testicles, one by one. The jailor like the monster of a Grand Priest at the inquisition ceremony or like a falcon pouncing upon its prey and carrying it in its claws, directed personally the whole operation and would go from one torture to the other on failing to wring out, from his victims, the name he wanted.<sup>169</sup> The young revolutionaries, pledged as they were to suffer for the Motherland and a better social order, got used to such brutalities perpetrated *ad-libitum* by the species of sub-human omnipotence strutting about in jail uniforms. They spent the long, dreary days of their life cribbed and caged like the animals in a slaughter house unbothered for, although an ordinary man in their position would have counted hours and minutes with sinking, trembling heart and chilling his bones with fright, and sending forth his yell for help or escape in that dire plight. After all, an impartial observer of such dehumanized senses can easily conclude that by living under those horrible conditions the political prisoners were turned into living corpses, buried alive in a stinking grave to trample on it with arrogance, seeking to crush the human dignity in him. And such a life of long, lingering death, spread out over the periods of untold privations, humiliations, and tortures, in no case could be more merciful than a short serving on the gallows.

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Quite curious were the jail-in-charges and their attitude on a number of issues. The reading of books, even those written by Western liberal writers, were regarded by them as

<sup>169</sup>. Sher Jung, n. 166, p. 28, cols. 3.

sedition converting people into terrorist. The literature on *Yoga* and theosophy was allegedly to be making the prisoners cynic. The jailor at Andamans, Mr. Barrie, seriously believed that book-reading was a profession only of women.<sup>170</sup> One of the reasons why he hated the books was that he had himself not progressed beyond his fifth form. He was smitten with jealousy for the revolutionaries who were better educated than himself. Therefore, if a prisoner was found with a slate or pencil or a book, Mr. Barrie would burn into rage and shout : “You want to read, and write. This is no school. Why did you not learn it at your father’s ? Send him on to the oil-mill, put him on ‘kolu’, confiscate his book, his slate, and pencil.”<sup>171</sup>

Once when Pandit Parmanand and Ashutosh Lahri were prohibited from reading certain books, they lost their temper and lifted Mr. Barrie bodily off the ground and toppled him down. For this they were lashed naked thirty times. For an offence of similar nature Sardar Prithvi Singh was kept continuously in a cell day and night for many years.

Quite unlettered was the jailor of the Multan prison. He agreed to supply books on any subject, provided the word “revolution” did not occur on the title page. That is why, he did not permit a book on “Industrial Revolution” although he had no objection in supplying the works of Marx, Engels and Lenin. Moreover, the great prisoners from Sir Walter Raleigh down to Prince Kuropatkin were permitted to write, but the young revolutionaries had not with them even the end of a broken pencil. It was an offence to have a scrap of paper with them.

On the other hand, Mr. Barrie left no stone unturned to disgrace the revolutionaries. He gave them the generic nickname

170. Manmath Nath Gutpa, n. 36, p. 277.

171. Savarkar, n. 149, pp. 156-57.



of bomb-throwers. Whenever he had to send for anyone of them, he would order *Jamadar* : "Go and fetch Bomb-golawalla No. 7" or "Go and gather quickly all the bomb-throwers and shut them up." When Savarkar enlightened the ordinary prisoners on the distinction between the bomb-thrower and the political prisoner and requested them to call by the latter name, the word was picked up quickly. But Mr. Barrie did not welcome the change. He never put up with it. If any one addressed the political prisoner as "Babu", Mr. Barrie would shout at him, "What Babu, who is Babu here ? They are all prisoners, you fool." "You are not political prisoners" that was Mr. Barrie's slogan to the end of the chapter. "They are wearing ticket No. D and that means 'dangerous.'"<sup>172</sup>

### Hunger Strikes

The inhuman punishments inflicted upon them led the young revolutionaries to demand the status of political prisoners and to get their demands accepted they resorted to hunger strikes. In 1929 the Lahore prisoners adopted this course for an indefinite period.<sup>173</sup> In their applications written on 17 June

172. *Ibid*, pp. 109-10.

173. It may, however, be recalled that they were not the first to adopt such a course of action. A little earlier in 1913 Nani Gopal also boldly defied the authorities at Andamans. He was sentenced to fourteen years' rigorous imprisonment for hurling a bomb on the running car of a superior police officer in Bengal. He was a young chap of sixteen and contrary to law, he was yoked to the oil-wheel. He resisted the high-handedness by going on strike. The authorities revenged by segregating him from his senior comrades on the plea that they were misleading him. But he did not yield. He resisted all the same. \* The authorities again punished him by keeping him stand with manacles on. The more they punished him, the wilder he became. They punished him for the stoppage of work, but he gave up even washing his own clothes. He was provided clothes made of gunny bags, He gave up wearing clothes altogether. They held him fast on the ground and put gunny

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1929 to the authorities both Bhagat Singh and Dutt demanded the status of political prisoners along with a special simple

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clothes upon him, and sewed them on his body, but he tore them off at night. Thereafter, he was enchained. Hands and feet were both strangled. But during the night he managed to break the lock, snap the cuffs and set himself free. They abused him in choicest slang, but he did not reply. He was punished for refusing to reply; and he refused to stand up before the officers. Then he was sent to solitary confinement and he refused to come out of his cell at all. He would not turn out even for bath. Nani Gopal went about naked during the day and they deprived him of one of his blankets at night. He threw off the other along with the first. He, therefore, remained day and night stripped in body and at night shivering with cold on the bare floor of his prison cell. His contention was that the jail authorities should rank him among political prisoners. He and his comrades were, he said, political prisoners and not thieves, robbers and dacoits. At last, Mr Barrie ordered to cane on his palm, no one was prepared to execute it. At last feeling helpless the authorities decided to remove him from there and confine in a district jail. But in that new place he at once resorted to hunger strike. What a remarkable defiance and courage that extorted the admiration of his enemies too. His strike continued for one month and a half. Only a little quantity of milk was daily administered to him through the nose. He was reduced to skeleton. Even then this lad was sentenced to stand for a whole week with hands and feet cuffed. But he remained firm, nothing could deter him. At last the authorities were forced to bring him back to the jail.

On other occasions too he was the first among political prisoners to initiate a defiance of authority. It is said that at the time of dinner or lunch Mr. Barrie kept standing before the political prisoners, lest they might talk to one another. But how could Nani Gopal tolerate it. He was the first to break the silence by openly haranguing his compatriots in the following words :

Brethren, we are all free. We are all born free. It is our birth right to speak to one another with love and kind greetings. If

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diet, certain toilet amenities, better accommodation and protested against the committal to forcible labour and urged the facilities of reading certain literature on history, politics etc. In the course of the hunger strike the condition of Jatin Das became very hopeless and within a few days he died in the jail.<sup>174</sup>

As expected the Government authorities replied by stating that demands of revolutionaries were extravagant and preposterous. They wanted to have the privileges of political prisoners. The Government authorities recognised no such category. The course that they had followed so far was of categorizing the prisoners as first division, second division and so on. Those classifications were made according to the mode of life, social status and education etc. The authorities further alleged that revolutionaries resorted to hunger-strike only to evade their trials which resulted in complete deadlock and paralysis of the legal machinery.

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an enemy were to deprive us of that right, we must challenge him. Here I am speaking to you and will continue speaking. Hardly had these words escaped his lips, when fuming and fretting Mr. Barrie and other two warders rushed at him. Nothing daunted, Nani Gopal went on with his eloquent discourse. He was lifted up bodily out of the prisoners and locked in the room. Still he had kept on talking and had not finished his peroration till everybody went out of the place. After some days he was persuaded by Savarkar to give up his hunger-strike. The former took him aside and whispered : ‘Do not die like a woman; if you must need die, die fighting like a hero. Kill your enemy and then take leave of this world.’ (Savarkar, n. 149, pp. 238,55).

174. The full text of the applications quoted by Pandit Motilal Nehru in his speech delivered in the Assembly on 14 September 1929; [K.M. Panikkar and A. Pershad, ed. by, *Voice of Freedom*, a collection of Pt. Motilal Nehru's speeches and addresses (Asia Publishing House, 1961 ), pp. 491-95.]

To overcome the legal deadlock created by the hunger-strike of Lahore prisoners the Government of India introduced an amendment Bill in the Assembly. They sought to introduce a new section 540-B in the Criminal Procedure Code. The provisions of the proposed amendment were that if any accused person, by his own voluntary act, was incapable of appearing before the court and declined to be represented by counsel, the court had discretion, in the special circumstances, to dispense with his presence.<sup>175</sup> Besides, the authorities, also named 600 persons to give evidence against the revolutionaries of the Lahore case.

The step of Government especially when the revolutionaries were still suffering by hunger-strikes, was considered by the people as "pouring oil over troubled waters" and adding insult to injury.<sup>176</sup> The amendment was strongly opposed by the nationalist forces in the Assembly. They stated that the first and most fundamental rule of criminal jurisprudence was that the law should prevail, that in every civilized country, every man was entitled to the protection of the law, and that every man who was accused of an offence, should be called upon effectively to answer it. The proposed Bill, therefore, traversed from general principles of criminal jurisprudence. It deprived the young revolutionaries of natural justice which the rule of law provided. It created a contingency which was neither contemplated by the law of India nor by that of any other country. Moreover, they contended that the past practices showed that when an accused escaped and disappeared thereby delaying his presence before the court, the proceedings were held up till the appearance of the accused. It happened to be so because the essential condition of a trial was that the accused must be confronted with his accuser before the court could sentence him or even could proceed against him. There

175. *Legislative Assembly Debates*, Vol. VII (1929), p. 711.

176. *Ibid*, Vol. IV (1929), p. 809.

was no such provision of law by which any *ex-post* evidence, oral or documentary, could be adduced against an absconder. No judge who had got an iota of judicial mind, could pass a sentence of death without a shudder and a pang of conscience and thereby commit a farce. Moreover, the persons for whom the amendment was sought to be introduced, had not rendered themselves incapable to attend the court merely to "save their skin" but they were sacrificing themselves for a "very noble object."<sup>177</sup>

The nationalist forces arrayed themselves with full force against the Treasury Benches. Every official plea in favour of the measure was replied with more convincing logic by them. Retorting the official plea that there prevailed no jail rules categorizing certain persons as political prisoners even in advanced countries of the West, Pandit Motilal Nehru declared it to be an initial fallacy underlying all the argument. Was there any thing analogous between India and the advanced Western countries? Were the people of the latter struggling for their independence against an alien domination?<sup>178</sup> An analogy in such a case could only be drawn from the pre-independent Ireland in 1816. There Thomas Ashe died after hunger strike to get a status of political prisoners for his revolutionary comrades. But his death resulted in the victory of the hunger-strikers and the jury censured the jail authorities for not acting promptly. Moreover, was it not a flagrant violation of human morality that the administrative authorities were prepared to give preferential treatment to a "miserable wretch" who, for his own advantage, through sheer dishonesty, committed disgraceful offences of theft, robbery, embezzlement. Just because he was a bank director, or manager who

177. Comment by Pandit Motilal Nehru in his speech delivered in the Assembly on 14 September 1929, *Voice of Freedom*, n. 174, p. 487.

178. *Ibid*, p. 495.

had been leading a luxurious life before committing the offence he was considered entitled for a special treatment in the jail. But

When it comes to the case of selfless patriots, they have, according to you, no station in life, and are men in low positions in life. According to us they really occupy a station in life, far above of an ordinary human being. And when it comes to the question of these noble souls, who suffer not for the pleasure of their flesh, but who sacrifice their flesh, for the well-being of others...you deny them a fair treatment. You think when a robber or a thief who lived well and who in order to live well got the means of doing so by doubtful means and is detected and sent to jail, then he deserves to be treated well better than these selfless patriots...who have no axe to grind... Sir I have no respect for that person for his mode of living or for his colour or for his station in life if he has been convicted of ...disgraceful crime. On the other hand, I have every respect for the man who has acted under the best of impulses and in the fullest belief that he was acting for, and in the cause of, his country. I should certainly take off my hat to him, and I should not even look at the other man, however, high his position in life may have been.<sup>179</sup>

Continuing his argument he added that nothing could be a clear travesty of justice than not to allow these political prisoners even the comforts of an ordinary European convict who, according to the authorities, had acquired better ways of living and whose health was more delicate than that of young revolutionaries. Concluding his argument he called upon the authorities to forsake their "fatish worship of prestige."<sup>180</sup>

Similar attempts were made earlier by Mr. Sen Gupta in Bengal when he moved for an adjournment of the Council

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179. *Ibid*, pp. 496 and 501.

180. *Ibid*, p. 501.

to discuss a matter related to the maltreatment of political prisoners as evinced by the transfer on 22 November 1925 of political prisoners from Berhampore Jail to Hazaribagh Jail without any sort of clothing or without giving them notice to make provision for their journey. When the adjournment motion was put to vote, it was carried by the House by 58 to 50.<sup>181</sup>

### Impact of Sufferings

Whenever the news of sufferings by revolutionaries in prison leaked out, people became red with rage. Despite all official precautions they were bold enough to voice their indignant protest against the brutalities inflicted on the revolutionaries. Besides many more were inspired to dedicate their lives for national liberation. As already told, Indian revolutionaries in America used to bring out a journal by the name of *Ghadar* which once published a cartoon showing V. D. Savarkar yoked to the oil-mill. An old Sikh who had served long in the Indian Army and had earned much wealth in business in America in the latter part of his life, one day suddenly got a copy of *Ghadar* from a newsboy hawking it about in the streets of America. As he and his colleagues saw Savarkar's cartoon, they were deeply pained by the sight and were full of tears, "while men like you, we felt, were sacrificing their all", told this Sikh gentleman later on, when transported to the Andamans, to Savarkar, "for their country, we were wasting our lives in spending lavishly on drink and enjoying ourselves. And the thought made us ashamed of ourselves."<sup>182</sup> This revolution of feeling made them take life seriously, join the *Ghadar* party, forgo their wealth and suffer as others had suffered for the independence of India. They became regular readers of articles in the *Ghadar*, gave all their fortune to the movement

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181. For further study see Jogesh Chandra Chatterji, *In Search of Freedom*, n. 1, pp. 284-91.

182. Savarkar, n. 149, p. 371.

left America, came back to India and joined in conspiracies to overthrow British rule.<sup>183</sup>

Such inspiring news made the revolutionaries suffer more and more because "it never loses, it produces its effects in due time. That is the only way that one can put fat in the fire and make it burn. Every drop of oil that fell into the vat below, as I turned the wheel that ground down and crushed the dried coconut-kernels in the rut and the well, was a spark that had kept blazing the sacred fire of discontent already aflame all over the country."<sup>184</sup>

Likewise, there were persons like Pandit Jagat Ram, who were also once easy-going men and did not dabble at all in politics. They happened to get Savarkar's *First War of National Independence*. The reading of the book inspired people like him so much that ultimately it obtained for them a ticket for the Andamans.<sup>185</sup>

There were still many others who strived to live up to the noble ideal of sacrifice and practise austerities. They were like those Russians who read with as much eagerness and interest the accounts of the prisoners transported to Siberia for the political crime of shooting Czar Alexander as they might over pages of a book describing the life of Czar Nicholas, or of the hypocritical priest Rasputin—full of romance, mystery, lust and dupery. And they certainly cherished greater sympathy and reverence for the former than they pitied or hated the latter. A people's glance is fasted less upon the doxies of luxurious palaces, than they were riveted upon the cottages of the exiled and on the jails of the people imprisoned for political crime.

In the United Provinces the people were stirred in 1927 by the worthy record of the three Kakori "Conspiracy" priso-

183. *Ibid.*

184. Statement by Savarkar, *ibid.*, p. 372.

185. *Ibid.*, p. 370.



ners Ram Prasad 'Bismil', Ashfaqullah and Roshan Lal. People felt that the Kakori revolutionaries did for Uttar Pradesh—in fact for the whole of India--what Khudi Ram Bose, Kanai and Satyen had done about two decades ago for Bengal. The following verse appeared to be expressing the reaction of the general mass of people :

Bismil, Roshan, Lahiri, Ashfaaq are dying by torture. Millions will born by their blooshed.<sup>186</sup>

According to an account of an eye witness when 'Bismil's' funeral procession passed through the streets of Gorakhpur the businessmen and merchants freely distributed their merchandise to sympathize with the departed hero's cause. The old sighed and the young surged with the "fire of revenge". Men, women and children showered flowers and petals over the pyre, several wept and others bowed before his passing procession.<sup>187</sup>

But the impact made by the contribution of Punjab revolutionaries like Bhagat Singh and Sukh Dev surpassed all the previous records. It had India-wide impact. Bhagat Singh had displayed an excellent spirit of self-sacrifice in 1930 when his father S. Kishen Singh endeavoured to save his son from death sentence. He submitted a petition to the Tribunal asking for permission to prove to them that Bhagat Singh, his son, was not present in Lahore on the occasion of Saunder's murder. On hearing this news Bhagat Singh became very angry. To him the organization of such a defence appeared surprising

186. *Swami Keshavanand Abhinandan Granth*, n. 28, p. 20.

187. R. Sahagal, ed., *Azadi ke Parvane* (Allahabad, Karmayogi Press, 1948), p. 220.

It is said that most of the articles inserted in the book appeared in periodicals like *Chand*, *Bhavishya*, *Prabhat* and *Pratap*. The editor claims that these articles had been written either by revolutionaries themselves or their sympathizers.

and to be inconsistent with his patriotic principles. He wrote to his father in anguish that this intelligence on his part was proving to be "too severe a blow"<sup>188</sup> to be born with equanimity. It had upset the equilibrium of his mind. He believed that his life was not so precious at least to him as he might probably think it to be. It was not at all worth purchasing at the cost of his principles. He added : "Let me be candid. I feel as though I have been stabbed at the back."<sup>189</sup> Had any other person done it, he would have taken it to be nothing short of treachery. This was the critical juncture when everybody's mettle was being tested. "Let me say, father, you have failed", he concluded.<sup>190</sup>

The highly impressive and stirring defiance of the alien oppression by Bhagat Singh and colleagues came to be regarded a glorious chapter in the history of Indian freedom movement. Their careers became shining illustration of youth's supreme self-sacrifice for the nation. The episode of their unflinching dedication to the ideal of freedom and the sufferings they took upon themselves in its faithful pursuit, began to inspire the people to struggle ceaselessly till the last vestige of alien control or any other kind of economic oppression was brought to an end. Bhagat Singh was now the idol of lakhs of people, an open manifestation of undaunted courage in struggle launched against imperialist might. He became an ever memorable figure for the countrymen. The passion with which he struggled had reserved for him "a niche of honour and glory" in the history of India. "Justly remembered as 'Shahid-i-Azam' by his grateful countrymen for making the supreme sacrifice", said Pirithvi Singh Azad, "Bhagat Singh infused life into the

188. Yashpal, *Simhavalokan*, n. 147, Part III, p. 82. See also P. C. Joshi, "Bhagat Singh; Yesterday and Today", *Mainstream* (New Delhi), Vol. VII, No. 31, 5 April, 1969, P. 33; Santimoy Roy, "Revolutionary Movement and Role of Indian Muslims", *Ibid*, 10 May, 1969, Vol. VII, No. 36, p. 20.

189. *Ibid*.

190. *Ibid*. See also Suresh, n. 116, pp, 120-21.

youth and became their hero.”<sup>191</sup> It has increased our power for winning freedom for which Bhagat Singh and his comrades have died”, said Mahatma Gandhi.<sup>192</sup> “Their magnificent courage and sacrifice has been an inspiration to the youth of India”, said Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru, the then President of the Indian National Congress, in his tribute.<sup>193</sup> They died so that India may live. And this is how the young Khwaja Ahmad Abbas reacted on learning about the martyrdom:

...I remember a young man sitting in the corner of the Aligarh Muslim University Library, hiding the tears welling into his eyes behind a big book of reference.

That young man was me—and I was crying at the death by hanging of Bhagat Singh, the legendary terrorist in his early twenties, only a few years older than I was.

The newspapers reported that he along with his comrades, had cheerfully mounted the gallows, defiantly raising the slogan “Inquilab Zindabad”.

That day thousands of young men like me all over India were fasting and shedding tears for a brother and for a friend, whom they had never seen.

Soon after I remembered that some of us, in the darkness of the night and armed only with hockey sticks, had raided the University Swimming Pool which was always kept locked and guarded by a hefty chowkidar.

For, inside were two rare treasures lifesize portraits of the British King and Queen, hanging high on the wall.

Hidden in the rose bushes (even today I can smell the strong scent) we had waited for the watchman to pass

191. Gopal Thakur, *Bhagat Singh* (New Delhi, 1953), p. 26; Prithvi Singh Azad, “Sardar Bhagat Singh”, S.P. Sen, n. 117, p. 155.

192. Quoted by Prithvi Singh Azad, n. 191, *Ibid.*

193. *Ibid.*

on his leisurely round, then broken a glasspane to gain entry through the bathroom.

Forming a human pyramid, we had climbed on each other's shoulders to reach the portraits which we then carried out, like stretchers in a hospital.

In a remote corner of the football ground, we smashed the glass in the frames with our hockey sticks, then scribbled revolutionary slogans with thick red pencils, careful hold them in our left hands.

Then we impaled the portraits on the iron fencing of the British Pro-Vice-Chancellor's bungalow and only then we felt that we had avenged Bhagat Singh's death.

Today it appears a futile and youthfully absurd gesture but at that time it seemed very important to vindicate our national self respect.<sup>194</sup>

### **Public Sympathy and Response**

Shouting slogans and singing inspiring nationalist songs accompanied by the sounds produced by striking their fetters against one another, everyday the Kakori prisoners were driven through the different routes of Lucknow city, from the jail to the court and back. "Crowds of men lined up on the roadside" to welcome their heroes. This was itself a big propaganda for death-defying revolutionaries of India.<sup>195</sup>

Though some of the leading Congress leaders like Gandhi-ji deplored the violent activities of the revolutionaries, yet there were some other prominent national leaders who took a keen interest in the Kakori trial. Besides the valuable

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194 Khwaja Ahmad Abbas, "You Are Free", *The Weekly Newsday (New Delhi)* 28, October 1972, p. 7, cols. 3-4.

195. Jogesh Chandra Chatterji, n. 1, p. 321.

services rendered by Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi, Pt. Motilal Nehru also entrusted himself in organizing the defence of revolutionaries. Both the Ali brothers considered the defence very essential. Maulana Shaukat Ali personally attended the court to hear the proceedings of the case. Both Pandit Gobind Vallabh Pant and Mr. Chandra Bhan Gupta pleaded the case of the defendants. The annual session of the U.P. Provincial Congress held at Sitapur in 1925 passed a resolution in favour of fighting the case.

Subsequent to the verdict of death sentence for four Kakori prisoners several publicmen endeavoured to manage relaxation. A deputation consisting of five persons—Lala Lajpat Rai, Madan Mohan Malaviya, Sir Nawab Zulfikar Ali Khan, Sir Yakub Sahib,—met the Viceroy as a last bid to save their lives. Simultaneously Pt. Gobind Vallabh Pant and Rai Bahadur Sir Sita Ram also met the U. P. Home Member in this connection. These efforts, however, proved abortive on the insistence of the U. P. Governor, Mr. Hailey, to uphold the punishment. Expressing his indignation against the arbitrary role of the foreigners, a friend wrote to the editor of Benaras daily *Aaj* on 23 December 1927 :

How utterly impotent we have become today ? What a great degradation ? Even our Council Members, Pant and Sir Sita Ram, could not save the lives of the Kakori martyres. At the time of these Assembly and Council elections we spend and waste millions; hundreds of people abuse and bite each other. But see the fun. The way in which those very elected representatives of ours are listened by our “well intentioned government”, can be judged from the Kakori case judgement. The Government did not move an inch. For the continuation of such an unhappy state of affairs there is no other reason than our impotence. Will our eyes be not opened even now ? Will we still continue

to fight each other for good-for-nothing issues like the Assembly and Council ?<sup>196</sup>

There is also something to be said about the effect that the so-called Kanpur Communist trial produced on the minds of the people. No sooner the preliminary inquiry into the case commenced in the Magistrate's court, Colonel Cecil Kaye, Director of the Intelligence Bureau, called the correspondents of Reuter and the Associated Press. In order to defame the Indian Communists he told the Press people to report the case with a caption "Cawnpore Bolshevik Conspiracy Case." From the next day the word "Bolshevik" began to be read and spoken all over the country, from East to West and from the Himalaya down to Cape Comorin. By adopting such propaganda tactics could the British regime succeed in spreading hatred against the Communist revolutionaries? Did their campaign also attract the attention of anybody towards the Communists too and also serve to some extent the purpose of propaganda for the Communists at Government's expense and at the price of their imprisonment? Yes, it did. Like the Communists in China who fought their enemies with arms seized from them, the Communists in India also utilized the documents produced against them in evidence, to attract the people towards them. As soon as some extracts from these documents appeared in the newspapers, many read them and hungered for more. That automatically led them to come nearer to the movement which acquired considerable strength up to the year 1928. It should be remembered that in spite of being resolute believers in internationalism, the Communists are inspired by patriotism; but under no circumstances, are they narrow-minded nationalists.

Even the Indian counterpart of delinquents—most irresponsible creatures found in every society on earth and severely despised for mischievous and arrogant behaviour—did not lag

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196. *Swatantrata Sangram*, n. 49, p. 71.

behind in sympathizing with the sacrifices of the revolutionaries. Continuously known in indigenous social organism as "*Guru*" and "*Data*" some of these delinquents were brought to Saharanpur to identify the young revolutionaries like Shiv Verma and Jai Deo Kapoor after the arrest in the bomb factory case. In spite of being aware of their previous quarrel with them they flatly refused to recognize the revolutionaries, because they too understood the patriotic nature of the imprisoned. Later on they also sent a secret message through some policemen to help them. Expressing their regret over the previous quarrel they assured the revolutionaries of "not to be harmed in any way by the people of their caste". On the other hand, they requested the young patriots to tell them without any formality if they could render any service to their cause.<sup>197</sup>

Likewise, the people residing in the neighbourhood of the bomb factory in Saharanpur, totally refused to recognize Shiv Varma and his colleagues.<sup>198</sup>

The significance of the impact created on the mass of people due to shooting either of the government official or an approver, can be guessed by an account rendered by Bhagwan Dass Mahour, one of the revolutionaries. During the railway journey from Gwalior to Poona, along with Sadashiv Rao Malkapurkar, he was arrested by the excise police at Bhusaval railway station in 1929. On the opening of their trial, two of their old colleagues Fanindra Nath Ghose and Jai Gopal who had by now been converted government approvers, were brought to Jalgaon court to identify them. On getting a suitable opportunity during the trial Bhagwan Dass fired two shots at the approvers. There prevailed a great pendemonium all around. The police and the revolutionaries were shooting on either side. But the people assembled on the scene did not support the police. Enthusiastic public all around was feeling greatly proud on

197. Yashpal, n. 14, Part II, p. 31.

198. Ibid, p. 32.

the "brave deed" of the revolutionaries. To encourage them they were raising to the highest pitch the slogans "Long live Revolutionaries", "Down with the Traitors", and "Glory to the Martyrs".<sup>199</sup> Their enthusiasm and optimism was at its climax. On the roofs of houses and tree tops near the court men were found sitting, standing and leaning and "a vast ocean of humanity" was visible everywhere. They pelted stones on the policemen. The vans taking the approvers to the court were also showered with stones. They had almost become delirious out of their patriotic zeal, and hatred and rage for the approvers by shouting them down: Death to the traitors". Later, some people attempted to set the court building on fire. Forty persons were arrested and convicted on the charge of breaking peace. Section 144 was promulgated.<sup>200</sup>

After fasting for 63 days when Jatindranath Sanyal died in 1929 in Lahore Jail his corpse was handed over to his younger brother Kiran Das. Millions of people gathered at the railway station to pay their homage to Jatin as his body was carried from Lahore to Calcutta. Before leaving Lahore the dead body was taken into procession in the city. The crowd of millions joined this procession. There had followed mud all over the roads due to the crippling of the flowers showered on the body. At Calcutta six lakh persons joined the funeral procession.<sup>201</sup> The reverence displayed by the people was a moral victory of the Revolutionary Party and an open denunciation of the British Government. People had paid the price of his sacrifice.

On 14 September 1929 Pandit Motilal Nehru moved for the adjournment of the session of the Assembly to censure the Government policy regarding the treatment extended to Jatind-

199. *Swami Keshvanand Abhinandan Granth*, n. 28, p. 212. For further study see also Sukh Dev Raj, n. 12, pp. 143-57.

200. *Ibid*, p. 305.

201. Manmath Nath Gupta, *Rashtriya Andolan Ka Itihas* (Delhi, Sushil Publications, 1961), p. 62.



ranath on his hunger-strike, which resulted in his death and endangered the life of others. In his sorrowful speech he accused the authorities guilty of betraying humanity and said he was reminded of the case of Nero fiddling while Rome was burning. They issued communiques and wrote circular letters while the "high-souled" men were lingering between life and death.<sup>202</sup> The censure motion was carried. The incident was so moving that even the Home Member, Mr. Crerar, while answering to the motion openly confessed that "the occurrence...is a matter which Government do sincerely deplore."<sup>203</sup> Indignation against the Government policies reached its climax when one of the opposition Members of the House, Amar Nath Dutt, nicknamed the Home Member "the limb of a vicious system," which wanted to keep one-sixth of the human race in subjection. He characterized both the Central and Provincial Governments as so many murderers who remained so callous and indifferent when the "Angel of Death was flapping its wings within the hearings of these light-hearted revellers." There was no court of Justice to sit in judgment over them in this world. They would have to appear before the "bar of history and humanity" as murderers, and the day would come when they would have their due. Those whom God wanted to destroy, first deprived them of their senses. They would not follow the righteous path, for "robbers and freebooters" did not do so, neither did murderers. On the eve of concluding his speech he reminded the authorities in the words of their own poet :

"England shall perish,  
write that word in the blood she has split,  
Perish hopeless and abhorred.  
Deep in ruin as in quiet."

The speaker also quoted Tagore :

"The vessel will sink when the load of sin is great."

202. *Voice of Freedom*, n. 174, p. 502.

203. *Legislative Assembly Debates*, Vol. IV, (1929), p. 803.

Pointing towards the authorities, he concluded, "You are destined to be drowned for your sins of omission and commission and thy flag will be laid in the dust."<sup>204</sup>

Challenging the oppressive character of British Imperialism in his statement delivered at the Sessions Court on 6 June 1929 Sardar Bhagat Singh had also said: "Imperialist exploiters may be able to crush men, but they cannot kill the ideas." Asserting that no amount of repression could crush a revolutionary movement Bhagat Singh cited the historical examples of *Lettres Decanettet* and Bastille in both of which cases even the worst repression could not suppress the revolutionary movement in France. Likewise, neither the rope nor the exiles in Siberia could extinguish the flames of October Revolution. Neither the "Bloody Sunday" nor "Black and Tense" could throttle the wave of independence in Ireland.<sup>205</sup> Likewise, speaking in defence of the appeal in the High Court he had said that a regime which took shelter under deplorable practices, which snatched away the natural rights of man, was no longer entitled to survive. If it survived, then its neck is drowned in the blood of thousands of innocent people. If the law did not keep in view the objective of certain action, neither there was hope of any justice nor there could be established permanent peace.<sup>206</sup>

Similar reverence was displayed by the public at Allaha-bad on the martyrdom of Chander Shekhar Azad on 27 February 1931. The news of his murder<sup>207</sup> reached instantly in the

204. Ibid, p. 811-12.

205. Suresh, n. 116, p. 90, See also *Mukfi*, n. 117, p. 23.

206. Ibid, p. 97

207. It is interesting to recall that the pistol that was used by the famous revolutionary and freedom fighter Azad, during his fatal encounter with the imperialist police has recently been brought back to India from Britain. It took the U. P. Government 18 months of intense efforts in procuring the pistol. The weapon was taken

(footnote contd.)

University where the classes had just met in their morning session. Realizing what had happened, both the president of the students union and professors moved from class to class and called upon the students to leave their classes. "Our Comrade Azad is dead and is lying in Alfred Park," said one of the professors to his colleagues. "We want to pay our homage. It would be count of you to disperse the class."<sup>208</sup> By eleven there had gathered a big crowd of boy and girl students of the University at the Park to have a last glimpse of the revered. And soon the park began to resound with the slogans of "Long Live Revolution." The students took away the earth where the drops of Azad's blood had fallen.<sup>209</sup>

(previous footnote contd.)

to England as a memento by the then Allahabad Superintendent of Police, John Bower. Sir Bower, who had opted for the Scotland Yard after the Alfred Park incident, agreed to part with the pistol after prolonged persuasion by the Indian High Commission in London which was acting on behalf of the U. P. Government. It had a lot of sentimental value for Mr Bower and in the beginning he was reluctant to part with it. At the time of returning the weapon Mr. Bower requested the U. P. Government that a photograph of Azad's statue installed at Allahabad be sent to him.

The U P. Government exhibited the pistol during the Silver Jubilee Celebrations of Indian Independence(1972). Weapon will be kept in the State Museum at Allahabad. The procurement of Azad's pistol is part of the U.P. Government's efforts to collect all such historical documents and weapon connected with the independence movement.

[*National Herald* (New Delhi), 30 May 1972, p. 1, cols. 5-7; *Patriot* (New Delhi), 30 May 19 2, p. 4, cols. 5-7; *Statesman* (New Delhi), 30 May 1972, p. 1, cols. 2-4; and *Times of India* (New Delhi), 30 May 1972, p. 3, col. 4. See also the rejoinder of Yashpal on the Alfred park incident published in the *Hindustan*, magazine section (New Delhi), 29 October 1972, pp. 142, cols. 3].

208. The account is rendered by Professor Rajnath Pande who was a student of the University and witnessed the scene, *Narmada*, (Delhi) April 1960, p. 48.

209. Ibid, For further study see also Sukh Dev Raj, n. 12, pp. 211-25.

People led by Purushottam Das, Tandon and Mrs. Kamla Nehru collected Azad's ashes from the spot where the last rites were performed by the police. They were moved to the centre of the city, wherefrom they were taken in a procession which culminated in a condolence meeting at Purushottam Park. Flowers were showered over the ashes. People walked bare headed and bare footed in the procession. The whole city observed strike. The public craze to immortalize him is also evident from the fact that the people made "*Talisman*" etc. from the ashes of the deceased for their children and even some ladies orthodoxly rubbed the ashes on their breasts in an aspiration of giving birth to sons as brave as the martyr. Others began to worship the tree in the Alfred Park, under which Azad had died in the encounter. His admirers pasted vermillion on the trunk of the tree, incense were burnt and flowers offered too. The large crowd coming to worship the tree became unbearable to the British administration. It got the tree cut. But how the people's reverence and faith could be subdued by such measures? They renamed the park as Azad Park from that very day and till today this park carries this very name. Recently the State Government has also opened an Azad Museum in this park. Many a locality and park in other cities too were named after him.

The appreciation by the people of the revolutionary movement is also reflected by the fact that revolutionary home-decoration year calendars were popularly in vogue. A specimen shows a consortium of eleven revolutionary leaders (including Azad, Bhagat Singh, Rohan Singsh, Ram Prasad 'Bismil', Ashfaq-ullah) with their photos depicting an idea conforming the set-up of a temple. An inscription upon it is "Azad Mandir" which reflects the purpose and force of the movement.<sup>210</sup> A similar illustration of public appreciation is seen through another calendar relating to the martyrdom of Bhagat Singh on the

210. See the illustration included by Manmath Nath Gupta, n. 36, p. 293.

cartography of India with his head sequestered and being offered in a ceremonial plate with his own hands to the feet of chained and crowned lady depicting her as Motherland.<sup>211</sup>

During the course of his trial Bhagat Singh delivered bold and patriotic speeches. They were published in all the newspapers in India. People in the hotels or cafes or in the streets read them loudly to make the people around them listen. Their manner of reading them displayed their keen interest and enthusiasm in the cause upheld by Bhagat Singh and his colleagues. To get their death sentences commuted people observed strikes and organized processions. In Bombay the train service was stopped.

On 24 March 1931 Bhagat Singh and his colleagues were hanged. Moving towards the gallows they raised their pet slogans of revolution and against imperialism and the other prisoners of the entire jail echoed their slogans. None of them took their meal that day. After the hanging the dead bodies were not surrendered to the public. But the public had deputed its men on every road going out of Lahore city to know the exact place of funeral ceremony. The dead bodies were taken in a heavily guarded police van towards the bank of the Satlej river. Even before dawn many people arrived at the railway bridge over the river and found three pyres burning. In the day time there had assembled a very huge crowd. Everybody was jumbling to obtain either the ashes or the remains. When the news spread in other parts of the country, there was a big strike everywhere. In Calcutta people's emotions were roused to the highest. The army men were deputed to patrol all over the roads and to control any violent outbreak. In Kanpur the people attacked the currency office, court and telegraph departments. In the years to follow the public continued to keep the martyrs' memory fresh in mind by implementing into practice the words of the following well-known verse :

211. See the illustration included by Chander Shekhar Shastri, *Bharatiya Aatankvad Ka Itihas*, n. 36, p. 376.

**Shahidon ki chitaon per  
Lagenge her sal mele,  
Vatan per marane walon ka  
Yahi baki nisan hoga.**

(There will be meeting fairs every year on the funeral place of the martyrs. This will be the only befitting memory of those who perished on the altar of Motherland.)

Before the martyrs' ceremony held at Ferozepore in 1961 there prevailed some impression that the people had, to a greater extent if not fully, ignored and remained indifferent towards the contribution of these revolutionary martyrs. It was alleged that with the success of the constitutionalists and peaceful agitators in the freedom struggle and their subsequent ascendancy to power the revolutionary group was forgotten with no marks or salutations. In great agony a poet commented sometimes ago :

*Shahidon ke mezaron per na dipak hain na hain mele, Vatan per jo mare, Ounka nahin baki nishan koi.*<sup>212</sup>

(No candle burns nor congregation meets on the graves of martyrs. No stone was raised for those that perished for the nation.)

The Government of Uttar Pradesh had awarded a pension of Rs. 60/- only per month to Bismil's old mother. After her death the amount awarded to his sister was reduced to Rs. 40/- per month. Each of the Governments of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh awarded a pension of Rs. 25/- only per month to the mother of Chander Shekhar Azad, who lived more or less on starvation in a thatched hut for nearly 18 years after the death of her son. This appeared to be more or less her exilement to Andamans minus the presence of jailor. But she did not

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212. Verse published in a special issue of a monthly magazine *Narmada* edited by Banarsi Das Chaturvedi, former M.P. and published by Nutan Prakashan Mandir, Delhi, April 1960, p. 1,

feel discouraged. A few years ago she had told one of her sympathizers, "My son has burnt himself in the iron-furnace, even the stone is broken into pieces, but see my heart. It is stronger than iron and stone. It has been burning in the iron-furnace for the last eighteen years and has not broken as yet."<sup>213</sup>

Distressed by such unfortunate developments Chamanlal Azad, a sixty year old veteran freedom fighter, perhaps appeared to be correct in responding to a reporter's query about his feelings on the eve of the nation's 25th anniversary like this :

As yet we have only achieved half of our freedom. My colleagues and I dreamed that with the departure of the British a completely new social order would emerge. Independence for us meant not only political freedom but also economic freedom. which unhappily, we have still not achieved.<sup>214</sup>

Another Veteran revolutionary of Kakori Conspiracy fame, Sachindra Nath Bakshi also feels that free India does not live up to his dreams and aspirations. He recalled that in 1921 he and his contemporaries had ardently expressed the hope of creating an India free of all foreign control. Independent India would be free from all examples of man exploiting man. Unfortunately, Mr. Bakshi said, India in his times had not become the great power he expected to it.<sup>215</sup>

Likewise, Prithvi Singh Azad did a lot of plain speaking at a reception organized by the Delhi Municipal Corporation on behalf of the Citizens of Delhi on 14 August 1972 for the

<sup>213</sup>, The account has been rendered by Pt. Banarsi Das Chaturvedi with whom Azad's mother stayed for some days, in *Narmada*(Delhi) April 1960, p. 128.

<sup>214</sup>. *Motherland* (New Delhi), 16 August 1971, p. 3, col. 3.

<sup>215</sup>. *Ibid*, col. 5,

delegates of freedom fighters attending their third annual All-India Convention. Shri Azad regretted that the Government had done nothing for freedom fighters during the last 25 years. He said those who were "stooges" Of the British Empire were still in the Government and occupying privileged positions. In his voice choked with emotion, Shri Azad warned the rulers of the country that if such things continued for a long time, he feared India might come under foreign rule again and the sacrifices of the revolutionaries would go waste. He warned the Prime Minister if she did not fulfill the promises she made to the country, the people would not forgive the Government. He said that there was not so much danger from Pakistan or China as it was from the power-hungry people, within the country.<sup>216</sup>

One can gather from the above mentioned statements only this that successful nationallism has not been particularly grateful to its heroic and martyred pioneers who live till recently in obscurity as embittered old persons. Nevertheless, the situation has taken a turn from 15 August 1972 onwards. Grand receptions were held the capital on that day in honour of these revolutionaries who blazed a trail.

Addressing delegates to the Third All-India Convention of Freedom Fighters at a reception at Azad Park on the evening 14 August 1972 Kidar Nath Sahni, the Mayor of Delhi Municipal Corporation said the long struggle they had waged against foreign rulers would be remembered not only in this country, but in the world.

Their deeds had not only resulted in the freedom of India, but given inspiration to fighters of the world to overthrow the yoke of oppression and bury deep the forces of imperialism and colonialism, he said.

Mr. Sahni pledged that the country would keep alight the torch of freedom, and make India the land of their dreams.



This would be the proper way of honouring those who had sacrificed a lot for independence.

He said that Delhi had a glorious history in the freedom struggle. It had produced eminent revolutionaries like Bhai Bal Mukund, Master Amir Chand and Lala Hanumant Sahai. With such a tradition, the citizens of Delhi felt a special honour in welcoming freedom fighters from around the country. Citizens of Delhi are happy and feel proud of giving the reception.<sup>217</sup>

### **Prime Minister Awarded Tamra Patras to Freedom Fighters**

A representative group of about 1,100 freedom fighters drawn from all parts of the country on 15 August 1972 received *Tamra Patras*, a commemorative copper plaque, as a token of recognition of their sacrifices in the cause of the country's freedom.

The *Tamra Patras* were given by Prime Minister Indira Gandhi at a special ceremony held at the Diwan-e-Aam in the historic Red Fort. The ceremony was earlier inaugurated by President V.V. Giri.

Twenty-seven freedom fighters, one each from the 27 States and Union Territories, received the plaque from the Prime Minister. The others got their plaque in their seats.

The recipients included many women. It was a sight to see some of the freedom fighters ripe with age—some of them even bending down—walk up to the rostrum to receive the plaques.

Shri Giri, in his tribute to the freedom fighters, said they were inspired by the noblest of sentiments and sacrificed their all in challenging the mighty British.<sup>218</sup>

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217. *Indian Express*, (New Delhi), 15 August 1972, p. 8, col. 5. See also *Motherland* (New Delhi), 15 August 1972, p. 3.

218. *Motherland* (New Delhi), 16 August 1972, p. 2, col. 5.

Of the recipients, 156 were from Uttar Pradesh. The rest were: Bihar 122, Maharashtra 108, West Bengal 95, Tamil Nadu 84, Madhya Pradesh 71, Rajasthan 61, Andhra Pradesh 55, Gujarat 53, Mysore 45, Delhi 32, Orissa 31, Kerala 29, Assam 26, Punjab 27, Himachal Pradesh and Jammu and Kashmir 21 each, Haryana 18, Goa, Daman and Diu 11, Tripura 6, Manipur and Pondicherry 5 each, Meghalaya 3, Chandigarh and Mizoram 2 each and Arunachal Pradesh and Nagaland one each.

The *Tamra Patra*, a PIB release said, designed and produced by the Directorate of Advertising and Visual Publicity, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, was a copper plaque, 16.51 by 22.86 cms. having an attractive floral design and an engraving of the State emblem. As many as 15,000 plaques had been prepared.<sup>219</sup>

### Prime Minister Pays Tributes to Freedom Fighters

It may be recalled that on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of our independence there was held the Third All-India Freedom Fighters Convention at Vithal Bhai Patel House, New Delhi on 12 August 1972. The hall was packed with aged and veteran freedom fighters, most of whom were in *khadi*; so much so that the large crowd that came in for the function could not find space in the packed hall and thronged the corridors and spilled on the lawns. Mrs. Gandhi also addressed the convention. In her statement she said that she had come to pay her homage to the revolutionaries and to seek their "ashirwad" for the "garibi hatao" programme. "The India that you and I thought for has not yet been realised. I seek your blessings in building a new India."

Explaining her standpoint she said that though the fight for freedom was over, the fight against poverty and economic

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<sup>219</sup>. Ibid.

disparities had just begun. The younger generation did not always agree with the older generation but there was a lot that youth could learn from the aged. Youth had energy but it was age that brought patience and tolerance. The youth of today lacked the qualities of patriotism, determination and sacrifice that had enabled the older generation to fight for freedom and win it.

Mrs. Gandhi said the stories of all revolutionaries should be recorded so that they might inspire the youth of today as well as tomorrow.

The nation, she admitted, had not been able to repay its debt to the revolutionaries. Even the pension scheme, introduced by the government this year, was not adequate. Hundreds might be left out inadvertently. Not everyone who participated in the freedom struggle went to jail.<sup>220</sup>

There was a lot of nostalgic reminiscencing at the function and Mrs. Gandhi too could not help lapsing into history: "When I went to jail in 1942 I did not hope to be free for at least seven years. Similarly, my grand-father and other leaders could not visualise a free India. They only knew what they had to do." All those who took part in the freedom struggle had got as much out of it as they had given it. "They became better people."<sup>221</sup>

Mr. K.C. Pant, Minister of State for Home Affairs, inaugurating the convention, said that only about 1,200 revolutionaries could be called for the silver jubilee celebrations of India's independence. But the country had not forgotten the hundreds of others who fought for a free India. "A nation that forgets its revolutionaries cannot progress", he said.

Mr. Pant said that commemorative columns, with the names of all those who had participated in the freedom struggle

220. *Times of India* (New Delhi), 13 August 1972, p, 3, col. 3.

221. *Ibid*, cols. 3-4.

were to be built in every city. School children could offer flowers there on Independence Day.<sup>222</sup>

The government, he said, had collected Rs. 72,000 for the welfare of the freedom fighters. Financial assistance or pension would be given to the revolutionaries. Formerly, a jail certificate had to be produced before pension was granted. Now on a certificate from an MLA, MP or former MP, revolutionaries would be given pension. Mr. Pant said there should be no hesitation in asking for assistance. The aid should not be taken as charity. The government was only doing its duty to the revolutionaries.<sup>223</sup>

He concluded by saying that *Tamrapatras* would be distributed to the freedom fighters not only in the capital but in the various State capitals by Chief Ministers.<sup>224</sup> Accordingly, the Tamilnadu Chief Minister presented *Tamrapatras* to 114 freedom fighters at Madras on 2 October, 1972. About a decade ago in, 1961, a Martyrs' Conference was held under the auspices of Ferozepure District Congress Committee on the spot where Bhagat Singh, Sukh Dev and Raj Guru were cremated forty years ago. This was the first conference of its kind after partition. Arrangements had been made to run special trains and buses that day. Over a lakh persons from all over the State started assembling from the early hours at the Sutlej banks. Many trekked several miles on foot or bicycles to pay their homage, while some others came beating drums and raising slogans "Bhagat Singh Zindabad". The

222. Ibid, col. 4.

223. Ibid.

224. Ibid, col. 4.

On the occasion of the Convention presided over by Raja Mahendra Pratap there was circulated a statement in which it was said that the revolutionaries fought for freedom with an aim to eradicate poverty and to establish socialism. It has not been achieved. Let the Government pay more attention in this direction. [*Nav Bharat Times* (New Delhi), 13 Aug. 1972, p. 3, col. 5].

conference assumed the form of a *mela* (fair) and the banks of the Sutlej resounded with loud shouts of revolutionary slogans.<sup>225</sup>

Addressing the conference Sardar Partap Singh Kairon, former Chief Minister of the Punjab, declared amidst loud cheers that his Government would raise memorials to all those martyrs who laid down their lives for the country in the various movements beginning from the first national upsurge of 1857 including those who died in jails. He reminded the audience that Bhagat Singh lived, fought and died for the country and as such the people must keep these ideals before them, if they wanted to pay real homage to these revolutionaries. Continuing further, he stated that the Government of Punjab would prefer schools and hospitals to statues as memorials. Substantial amounts would be given for building schools and hospitals at places where the martyrs laid down their lives. He, therefore requested the people to inform the State Government of all such heroes, so that adequate steps could be taken soon for raising memorials in their honour.<sup>226</sup> The conference was also addressed among others by two former revolutionaries, Dr. Bhagwan Singh of *Ghadar* Party and Prithvi Singh Azad, and S. Kuldip Singh, the younger brother of Bhagat Singh.

The martyrdom anniversary was also observed at the home village of Bhagat Singh, Khatkar Kalan, 30 miles from Jullundur. Two conferences, sponsored by the Congress as well as the Communists respectively were held simultaneously and side by side.

A suggestion for putting up the portraits of the three martyrs in the new Assembly Hall at Chandigarh was made in a resolution passed at meeting of the Ambala Cantonment Youth -

225. *The Tribune* (Ambala) 24 March 1961, p. 1, col. 7.

226. *Ibid.*

Congress.<sup>221</sup> At the meeting two minutes' silence was observed. Commenting upon the sacrifices of these revolutionaries *The Tribune* stated:

Let us all take a leaf out of the book of our martyrs and dedicate ourselves to the service of the country. Thought should be given to the question how the spirit that animated them can inspire our youngmen and young women and make them the instruments of fighting the narrow and fissiparous tendencies which are likely to jeopardise our freedom. Unfortunately when political power has come into our hands, we have begun to think more in terms of a community than of the country. The spirit of parochialism and sectionalism is anti-thesis of the spirit that animated our martyrs.<sup>228</sup>

During 1929-31 slogans like "Long live Revolution", and "Victory to Bhagat Singh" had become as much and perhaps more popular as those raised to display reverence to Gandhiji. Quite a large number of the Congressmen had requested Gandhiji to incorporate the commutation of the death sentence of Bhagat Singh and his comrades as one of the conditions in his negotiations with Viceroy. But Gandhiji refused to do so. He agreed only to request the Viceroy in this connection. The people, however, expected that their sentiments would not be ignored and hurt and the death sentence would be condoned. It happened, however, the other way round. Their feelings were injured. They felt angry that Gandhiji did not give real importance to this issue of sentence. It should, however, be remembered that one of the eleven conditions put forward by Gandhiji to the Viceroy, was the prohibition of drinking to which he appeared to have attached more importance than the condoning of the death sentence. It may also be recorded here that Chander Shekhar sent emissaries to Mahatma Gandhi

227. *Ibid.*, 28 March 1961, p. 10, col. 5.

228. *Ibid.*, 25 March 1961, p. 4, col. 1.

suggesting that if he could secure annulment of death sentence to Bhagat Singh and his colleagues, Azad would place himself along with his compatriots at Mahatma's pleasure, promising that thenceforward they would not engage themselves in violent activities. But Gandhiji did not give any promise.<sup>229</sup>

According to an account rendered by the B.B.C., on the eve of finishing stage of the talks with Irwin when Gandhiji usually returned to his Ashram he had a "dreadful evening with his colleagues and friends. He disclosed to Lord Irwin that Jawaharlal Nehru had told him that he had wept on his shoulders as that he had never wept when his mother died over this tragedy of the betrayal of India. Jawaharlal also said that there was the matter related to Bhagat Singh's punishment to death by hanging on which he was bound to appeal to Gandhiji. On the resumption of the talks next morning at ten o'clock - and that was the last day Gandhiji pleaded for Bhagat Singh's life—he got a flat refusal from the Viceroy. In reply Gandhiji said: "That was in the last degree unfortunate because he had then to go off by train on Thursday afternoon to Karachi, where he was meeting the Working Committee of the Congress and try to put their agreement across them. And if on that occasion the news came through that Bhagat Singh had been hanged, it would just "blow everything out of the water." And what could the Viceroy do about it. "I didn't think I could," replied the Viceroy "do anything about it."<sup>230</sup> Thus Gandhi's attempts to obtain a reprieve failed.

There is, however, prevailing some controversy over the actual facts of the case. In 1969 there appeared the second edition of a volume *The 'Vanishing Empire'*, first written and published in April 1937. The author claimed to know Bhagat

229. The account has been rendered by Sushila Devi "Chander Shekhar Azad", *Narmada*, n. 41, p. 44. See also Sukh Dev Raj, n. 12, pp. 228-30.

230. *Talking of Gandhiji*, Four programmes broadcast by British Broadcasting Corporation (Orient Longmans, 1957), pp. 63-64.

Singh personally and to have done much to organize for his defence. In his book he remarks that during the Gandhi-Irwin negotiations it was hoped that Gandhiji would be able to prevail upon the Viceroy to grant a reprieve to the three accused. The inside story why Gandhiji failed ultimately to save these young men from the gallows is now told by the author. Gandhiji had pressed for their reprieve and Irwin had agreed to do it in his own time. But, sadly enough, Dr. Satyapal queered the ditch by declaring publicly that the Viceroy had pledged to grant reprieve to Bhagat Singh and others. This news infuriated the English I.C.S. officers in the Punjab and they along with the Governor submitted their resignations *en bloc*. The Secretary of State changed his mind and three youngmen were executed even before their time.<sup>231</sup>

On the evening of the last day of negotiations Gandhiji and his party left Delhi for Karachi. The developments on the eve of his departure from Delhi and afterwards have been vividly described by his famous English lady disciple, Medeleine Slade (popularly known in India as Mira Behn) in the following lines:

We had just taken our place in the special train which was to convey the whole Congress Party to Karachi when Bapu was brought the news that Bhagat Singh along with two of his companions had been hanged that very morning in the Lahore jail. Bapu felt deeply shocked. As the news spread among the crowd on the platform, indignant and angry words could be heard on all sides. The public had been enthusiastic over the Gandhi-Irwin pact, and it seemed that they had got it into their heads that if Bapu could bring off a pact like that, it must have been possible for him to prevent these executions too if he had really

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231. Chaman Lal, *The Vanishing Empire* (New Delhi, Isagar Publications, 1969).



wanted to. Bapu had patiently to listen to the hostile shouts and angry questions, for no one was in a mood to stop for a reply. Only the departure brought relief.<sup>232</sup>

Gandhi and his party were lucky in a sense. Being a special train, it did not have a halt at many stations. Nevertheless, wherever it did stop there were angry and excited mobs waiting. Describing the incident at one of such halts Miss Slade continues:

The halt I shall never forget was the one at Sukkur. It was in the middle of the night. A big students' demonstration was waiting ready on the platform with a bust of Bhagat Singh. The students rushed up and down looking for the compartment in which Bapu was travelling, and as soon as they discovered it they all ran, carrying with them the bust, which they placed in front of Bapu's window and garlanded with flowers. Then they made a veritable assault on the compartment, doing their best to burst in through the doors. Besides Bapu and Ba, we were a party of about four. The men held the doors, which seemed about to give way any moment, and I was keeping guard at the windows, when suddenly a student, with his hands all bleeding, burst in through the lavatory window glass and squeezed himself through. I dashed into the closet to find another student with his head already through the hole in the window, and more students waiting outside to follow him. There was no time to stop and think about methods. I seized him by the hair and shoving my thumb into his neck on the windpipe, managed to bring him to a halt. The madness of the assault slightly lessened...We all thanked God when the train moved out of the station.<sup>233</sup>

232. Madeleine Slade, *The Spirit's Pilgrimage* (New York, McCann. Inc., 1960), p. 124.

233. *Ibid.*, pp. 124-25.

The session of the Congress met under great gloom. Bhagat Singh's name was sung up and down for two days in the Congress Nagar; the parents of the deadmen were exhibited at every place—possibly their charred flesh, had it been available, would have been thrown to the mob to appease it. People were indignant of Gandhiji and poured forth volleys of anger on him by showing black flags and presenting black flowers to him. Even a large number of Congressmen showed their disapproval against the incorporation of the phrase “while dissociating itself from and disapproving of political violence in any shape or form” in the resolution. The Congress, however, placed on record its admiration of the bravery and sacrifice of the three revolutionaries and mourned with the bereaved families the loss of their lives. In its opinion the triple execution was an act of wanton vengeance and a deliberate flouting of the unanimous demand by the nation of commutation. It believed that the Government had lost the ‘Golden’ opportunity of promoting goodwill between the people of two races, admittedly held to be necessary at that critical juncture, and of winning over to the method of peace the group which, being driven to despair, resorted to political violence.<sup>234</sup> Commenting upon this resolution *Bharat*, a newspaper published by the revolutionaries in London, wrote; “Here for those who have eyes to see, is an example of the work of those ‘disciples of truth’ what western demagogues ever exploited more cynically individual heroism and the sentiments of the public for their own ends.” In the view of the paper the Congress resolution was a sheer attempt “to cap” all no uncompromising condemnation of the political system that executed the deplorable act. The paper also believed that hanging up the revolutionaries was utilized by the Congress leaders to deliver speeches on non-violence. All these activities were clear-cut

234. Patabhi Sitaramayya, *The History of the Indian National Congress*, (Bombay, Padma Publications, 1946), Vol. I, pp. 456-57.

illustration of opportunism and outwardly show of the Congress.<sup>235</sup>

The controversial phrase regarding the disapproval of violence also did not appeal to the younger section in the Congress. The Volunteers' Conference at the Karachi Session passed the resolution with the phrase omitted, and the phrase became a matter of controversy subsequently at the meetings of the Provincial Conferences.

It may be recalled that while the proceedings of the session at Karachi were going on, there was uproar outside the pandal by younger people who had, the previous day, organized the black flag demonstration at the station when both Gandhiji and Sardar Patel, were forced to leave the train at a distance of 12 miles from Karachi.

Some of the relatives, especially women, displayed a very courageous spirit when their sons, brothers and husbands were being hanged on the gallows. On the eve of Ram Prasad 'Bismil' being hanged on 17 December 1927 his parents came to see their son for the last time. On seeing his mother "Bismil began to weep. in anger the mother scolded her son:

why do you betray cowardice? I came here with my head raised high for having given birth to a son who is struggling against the foreign government for his country's emancipation. I am proud that my son is not scared by the Government in the territorial domain of which the sun never sets. And lo, you are weeping. *If you were afraid of gallows why did you tread this path?*<sup>236</sup>

A few days after the death of Azad in an encounter with the police, Yashpal became the commander-in-chief

235. Manmath Nath Gupta, n. 36, pp, 273-74.

236. Yashpal, n. 14, p, 141.

of HSPRS. On his arrival at Allahabad a few days after in connection with the organization work of the party he was surrounded by a heavy reinforcement of the police early in the morning at the house of his lost. He was tried and sentenced to 14 years imprisonment. His mother came to see him in Naini Jail and encouraging him stated : "Whatever you have done, you have done knowingly. Let me not be ashamed of you."<sup>237</sup>

### **Sympathetic Feelings of Indian Police officers and Constables**

Some of the officials also secretly sympathized with the revolutionaries. In his *Experience of The Armed Revolution* yashpal mentions an incident taking place on the occasion of the Police attack on the bomb factory at Saharanpur in 1929. On the saying of the *Kotwal* that the revolutionaries had so much ammunition that they could kill all the policemen and escape easily, Shiv Verma replied, "what could they have got by killing the policemen? They were fighting after all the foreign rulers of the Indian people and only killed them?" The policemen were greatly impressed by this reply. With tears in their eyes some of them replied: "Oh Babu, what of us? We are the slave-dogs of our bread. Had we died then what? After all hundreds of us die even now. The life of you people is precious, who are doing something for others." Another policeman stated in agony, that he had no idea that people to be arrested were revolutionaries. He was told that they were going to arrest *Kokin-Faroshan*. Later on these policemen provided Shiv Verma and his colleagues all legal amenities. The *Kotwal* often used to praise their sacrifices for the country and he felt ashamed on his betrayal of the nation.<sup>238</sup>

There were other policemen who also assisted the revolutionaries either directly or indirectly. Perhaps the people could have never read the detailed account of 'Bismil's

237. *Ibid*, p. 137.

238. *Ibid*, p. 28.

revolutionary career but for the assistance of the police guards deputed in front of the cell where Ram Prasad 'Bismil' was kept in Gorakhpur jail after his arrest. In the Kakori case, the revolutionaries who stayed underground, did their best to assist the revolutionaries inside the jail to escape. They had arranged secretly with the police guard, and sent a message through him to Ram Prasad 'Bismil' informing him about the date and time when he would be taken away from the Gorakhpur Jail. On the appointed day at 12 midnight, the guard approached and told 'Bismil' "Wear my clothes and leave the place at once." Ram Prasad 'Bismil' asked, "What will happen to you?" to which he replied, "You don't worry about me. Your life is more precious than mine, so try to get away. What can they do to me? At the most they will convict me for 10 to 12 years, but they will not hang me."<sup>239</sup> At last Ram Prasad 'Bismil' put on the clothes of the guard, and walked a few steps from his cell, but stopped and thought it over. He retraced his steps towards the guard, and started removing the clothes. On seeing this the guard wept and touched his feet and said: "Panditji go at once, don't waste a single minute." He replied, "No, I will not go. I have thought it over. I will not. Your life is in danger for my sake. It is possible they might hang you,"<sup>240</sup> The constable tried his utmost to Persuade Ram Prasad 'Bismil' to escape, but it was of no avail. The entire scheme failed.

After the shooting at the Jalgoan Court when Bhagwan Das Mahour tried to counsel the policemen kept for watching him and his colleague, in an apologizing manner, how should they save their position, a young Musalman policemen replied immediately, "Babu, you have rendered a heroic feat. Don't be down-hearted. After all what could happen to us. At the most we would be dismissed and sentenced to four or six months imprisonment. This much we would suffer. Afterwards

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239. Sushila Azad, *Blitz* (Bombay) 9 July 1960, p. 14, col. 2.

240. *Ibid.*

we would maintain ourselves by, obtaining a job somewhere else. You do not worry about us." He concluded by saying: "Damn this government". His countenance was quite normal<sup>241</sup> other<sup>1</sup> policemen also whispered similar remarks to encourage Bhagwandas Mahour. In the meantime the police Superintendent appeared and ordered them to handcuff him. But they were reluctant to do it. He, however, persuaded them and got himself handcuffed. When the Police Superintendent with two of his white Seargents took him away from them, those police guards bid him farewell, without speaking, through their gratifying looks. He felt as if that Muslim constable was speaking to him, "Brave man, go and embrace the gallows with these unfaltering steps."<sup>242</sup>

After Bhagat Singh and his colleagues were hanged the jail inspector, Muhammad Akbar Khan, met some of his other colleagues in the Jail who were yet to be convicted and told them that as a servant he had to carry out its order but he was not happy. Now whenever the food was served to him it appeared like poison. He ended by saying: "Damn this existence which compelled the toleration of slavery".<sup>243</sup>

### Press

A certain section of the press also sympathized with armed revolution. There were published short stories, poems, plays and essays analysing and propagating the violent overthrow of British rule. Whenever any official was murdered, the action was extolled. Whenever any revolutionary sacrificed his life on the gallows, he was eulogized as a courageous hero and selfless martyr. The patriotic deeds of his life were given a wide publicity and the people were exhorted to imbibe

241. *Swami Keshvanand Abhinandan Granth*, n. 28, p. 305. See also Sukh Dev Raj, n. 12, p. 197.

242. *Ibid* p. 218.

243. *Yashpal, Simhasanachar*, n. 14, Part. III, p. 24.

and pursue the revolutionary creed for national liberation from foreign domination. The most prominent periodicals and journals of the period were: *Agradut*, *Swarajya*, *Chand*, *Kirti Pratap* and *Prabha*. During the life-time of Ganesh Shanker Vidyarthi both the latter journals were harbinger of revolution among the Hindi-speaking people. Vidyarthiji was always afoot to see the achievement of independence at every cost. It was not possible for him to discriminate between the different means although directed to the same object. Every participant in the national liberation deserved his sympathies irrespective of the fact to which category one belonged.

## CHAPTER II

# ECONOMIC ISSUES

### A—Growth of Economic Discontent

*The loss of India, however arising, would be final and fatal to us. It could not fail to be part of a process which would reduce us to the scale of a minor Power.... If, guided by counsels of madness and cowardice disguised as false benevolence, you troop home from India...you will find famine to greet you on the horizon.*

*[Winston S. Churchill, Speeches on India (London, Sec. edition, 1931) p. 81-2].*

### Introduction

In the postwar period the economic conditions of Indians were far from satisfactory. Quite a substantial number of them remained normally exposed to scarcities—ill-clad and underfed. In a statement delivered in the Legislative Assembly during those days, G. D. Birla, leader of Indian *bourgeoisie*, alleged that India was suffering not from world depression but from an internal depression, caused by the poverty of the agriculturists who constituted 75 per cent of the Indian population. Indian masses wore only 10 yards of cloth per head as compared with 18 yards in pre-war days.<sup>1</sup> Besides, the internal

1. *Indian Legislative Assembly Debates* (1929), Vol. II, p. 2110,



depression was also reflected in the rise of the prices of the other necessities of life. In fact, prices reached a level never before touched. If the figures for 1919 were compared with those of 1914, it will be found that in the case of rice, the rise ranged from 26 per cent in Assam to 73 per cent in the Central Provinces. In the case of wheat the lowest increase was 38 per cent in Assam and the highest 100 per cent in the Central Provinces. Even more serious was the case of millets, which were so largely consumed by the poorer classes. The increase in prices ranged from 102 per cent in the United Provinces to 132 per cent in Bombay. Famine and scarcity were declared in numerous areas.<sup>2</sup> The prices generally rose by an average of 93 per cent since the commencement of the war. The increase in piece-goods was just under 190 per cent for imported goods and just over 60 per cent for Indian made goods.<sup>3</sup> This high rise in prices was due partly to the imperialist nature of the alien regime whose whole energy only a year ago was devoted to the destructive work of World War I. The diversion of a large number of people formerly engaged in production, to the army and supply services; and the piling-up of a huge additional volume of credit and currency to meet the expenditure of war led to an enhanced cost of production of practically all commodities. Such conditions were bound sooner or later to create discontent among Indian people. They caused the "greatest distress and embarrassment" <sup>4</sup> to the poorer classes and persons living on small fixed incomes in the towns; but the effect had been felt by every section of the Indian community.

### Agriculture

One of the issues which created economic restlessness and alienated the Indian people was the agrarian policy of the British Government. She directed all her attention towards encour-

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2. *India in 1919* (Calcutta, Government of India, 1920), p. 66.

3. *Ibid*, p. 63.

4. *Ibid*, p. 67.

agement of producing such raw materials as jute, cotton, oilseeds and foodgrains with the object of encouraging their export to the British market. On the other side, the U.K. was the most advanced industrial country supplying most of the demands of India for manufactured goods. The tariff legislation of the Government of India was mainly motivated to promote this system. During the period 1875-76 to 1925-26 the quantity of Indian trade with U.K. increased by about Rs. 136 crores. It was an amount greater than that transacted with any other country.<sup>5</sup>

Besides metals, machinery, mill-work, railway plant and rolling stock, the most important article that had contributed to the bulk of the Indian import trade with U.K. was cotton products. England was then the biggest cotton textile manufacturing country in the world and India was her best customer. The single article of imported cotton goods occupied more than 50 per cent of India's total imports from Britain. Besides, it was only to the U.K. that the largest quantity of the Indian raw-cotton was exported. The figures for 1921-22 were 5,340 lakh tons worth Rs. 5,396 lakhs as compared for 1909-13 of 4,300 lakh tons worth Rs. 3,327 lakhs.<sup>6</sup> Significance of the fact can be measured from a remark made ironically about English Imperialism : "It said 'Christ' and meant 'cotton'."<sup>7</sup>

It will not be inappropriate to mention that the alien regime showed indifference towards a satisfactory organization of irrigation system which would have been of greater advantage to the masses of peasantry. But the spending of money on such projects as served the needs of British capitalists was obviously more important to the British administrators than the requirements of the Indian peasants. The slow development of irrigation is evident from the following table:

5. *Review of Trade of India in 1921-22*, Table 7, p. 47.

6. *Ibid.*

7. Wilhelm Ropke, *International Order and Economic Integration* (Holland, 1959), p. 115.

Irrigated Areas of British India<sup>8</sup>

Year	Million Acres	Percentage of cultivated areas
1912-13	49.22	21.8
1921-22	50.98	22.2

It is true that this cultivated area under irrigation in India was of the largest proportion as compared to any country in the world. But the factors like natural potentiality of irrigation in the country, rainfall, population and the percentage of the people depending on agriculture, should also be taken into consideration. In a country like India where rainfall is seasonal and that too uncertain, and not sufficient in major parts of her territory; where, being densely populated, there are required large agrarian products to feed its teeming millions; and finally, where more than 75 per cent of the people depended in those days on agriculture for their survival, because it was not only their main but also the only means of livelihood; the said cultivated area under irrigation was not adequate to meet all the requirements of natives then. Moreover, the British Administration showed no inclination of distributing irrigation facilities over climatically vulnerable regions like those of Gujarat, Mysore Andhra, Orissa, etc. Besides, the Government also did not make irrigation facilities available at low cost that an average peasant could afford, e.g., construction of tubewells, tanks and reservoirs in the village itself.

**Problem of Industrialization**

There was existing a powerful public opinion that the future of India depended on industrialization. Everyone was

8. K. T. Shah and K. J. Khambata, *Wealth and Taxable Capacity of India* (Bombay, 1928), p. 315. For further study see *Selected Works of Jawahar Lal Nehru* (Orient Longman, 1972), Vol. II, p. 237.

anxious that the country should be progressively made self-sufficient. But to the British people, especially the ruling agencies, industrialization appeared a "false beacon as a means of regeneration."<sup>9</sup> The policy of British Government towards India had throughout been believed to be dictated by the interests of the British traders, manufacturers and financiers. It was at the instance of these vested interests that the plan of industrialization was seriously obstructed.

Government attitude can be traced in the building up of railway industry. An Indian company was started for the manufacture of locomotives with a guarantee from the Government that they would purchase a certain proportion of locomotives produced by them. Shortly afterwards the Government found that there was a surplus of locomotives in the country and so they were not needed any more. But within two years it was found that there really was a shortage of locomotives in the country, and orders were at once placed in Europe and elsewhere. Forced by the circumstances, the owners of the locomotive industry converted it into a wagon factory, and the Government promised to purchase a considerable quantity at stated intervals. But here again history repeated itself and the company ceased to exist.<sup>10</sup>

It is interesting to recall that the temporary liberalism introduced in their attitude by the British Government during World War I, when Tata Iron and Steel Industry was encouraged, was reversed later on.<sup>11</sup> The administration neither encouraged nor gave any active support to the opening of new industries. The Fiscal Commission of 1921 had recommended the creation of Tariff Boards for the purpose of deciding the

9. Stanley Reed, *India—The New Phase* (London, 1928) p. 107.

10. For further study see K. M. Panikkar and A. Persha l, ed., *The Voice of Freedom, Selected Speeches of Pt. Motilal Nehru* (New Delhi, 1961), p. 456.

11. See *India in 1920*, p. 92; *India in 1923-24*, pp. 132-34.

application of the policy of discriminate portection in respect of Iron and Steel Industry and some other Industries. Jamna Das Dwarkadas, a prominent member of the Legislative Assembly in those days from the Bombay City, alleges that the alien regime foreseeing the future consequences and having known the fact that the defence of Empire during war period depended to a considerable extent upon the supplies of Tatas, launched strong move to ruin the Tatas, by secretly influencing the people to withdraw their deposits and to force them to sell it to some British concern.<sup>12</sup> The request made by the Tatas to enable them to obtain a loan from abroad of Rs. 4 crores by the Government guaranteeing that loan, was turned down by the Administration.<sup>13</sup>

Tatas were left with no alternative than either to liquidate their concern or to let it pass on to British concerns. The timely help of Rs. 2 crores on loan basis by the Maharaja of Gwalior, saved the situation for the moment.<sup>14</sup>

On the recommendattion of the Industrial Commission in February 1921, the Secretary of State sanctioned only the creation of a Central Department of Industries in the Government of India. The main functions of the department were confined to deal with industrial exhibitions, central institutions for industrial training, the geological survey of India, etc. It did nothing for the opening of new industries which needed substantial finances, and Indian businessmen alone were not in a position to afford them without any subsidy from the Govern-

12. *Motilal Nehru Birth Centenary Souvenir*, a collection of tributes and reflections (New Delhi, Centenary Committee, 1961), p. 121.

13. On the other hand, the "Annual Report of the Administration shows that the Government was ready to give some loans to Tatas. But a careful perusal of the material shows that the Administration attached such strings to such loans that it was almost impossible to take advantage of such offers. For further study see *India in 1925-26* (Calcutta, Government of India), pp. 54-5.

14. *Motilal Nehru Birth Centenary Souvenir*, n. 12, p. 65.

ment of India.<sup>15</sup> The apathy of the alien regime towards industrialization is also reflected in the export import trade figures of the years 1918-20.<sup>16</sup>

The development of Indian industries was further obstructed by the penetration and control of indigenous enterprises by British mercantile and capitalist classes. According to Joan Beauchamp appointed by the Labour Research Department in England to study the contemporary Indian economic situation, this was done in many ways. First, by the establishment in 1921 of the Imperial Bank of India by amalgamating all the Presidency Banks financed by the British capital and exercising control over all Indian banks, and through them, indirectly over other indigenous concerns, firms and enterprises. Secondly, by the transference of English companies to the Indian register and their foundation as Indian domiciled, and by the investment of English capital in companies already registered in India.<sup>17</sup> And thirdly, by absorbing the Indian controlled concerns by British enterprise.<sup>18</sup>

Among these three issues the first one is of special significance and hence needs elaboration. The control of India by British finance capital and latter's investment in the construction of railways, roads, irrigation system, postal services and a number of such other enterprises, required the penetration by British banking and loan companies in India. Moreover, the control of Indian banking system was necessitated by the British interest in controlling indigenous industrialization. According to Indian experts, by 1921 there were functioning in India 18 foreign banks financed by alien (predominantly British) capital with a paid-up capital of nearly 92, 000, 000.<sup>19</sup>

15. *India in 1922-23* (Calcutta, 1924), p. 136.

16. *India in 1920* (Calcutta, 1921) pp. 86-9.

17. Joan Beauchamp has not elaborated this point by illustration.

18. Joan Beauchamp, *British Imperialism in India* (London, 1934) p. 49.

19. *The Indian Central Banking Enquiry Committee 1931* (Calcutta, Government of India, 1931), Vol. I, part II, p. 173.

The predominant issue for the British mercantile classes was to develop the banking facilities in India rapidly but simultaneously obstructing the growth of a powerful competing Indian capitalism. Only after a few years of the crisis in 1913-17 (when nearly 67 Indian banks became the victims losing more than half of the total paid up capital of all the banks that survived the crisis) there occurred the crisis of 1919-25. Nearly 83 banks failed, involving a loss of Rs. 480.7 lakhs of paid up capital.<sup>20</sup> They did not receive the support in the crisis phase by the Presidency Banks which were fully assisted by the British Government out of public funds. This discriminatory attitude and practice against the Indian-controlled banks produced a considerable discontent among the Indian capitalist classes.

Like the Indian banks the Indian controlled concerns were also gradually absorbed by British firms. Due to the direct competition with the British firms as well as the world depression many industrial enterprises like the Peninsular Locomotive Company and the South Indian Locomotive Workshops and others were liquidated as they were not in a position to face British competition. But other concerns, for example, lead, cement, leather and paper, were forced to pave the way for the penetration of English capital with its subsequent control of them.

### **Transport**

It was also felt by Indians that there was no proper distribution of transport and communication facilities. Here, it must be noted that from the global statistics one might be justified in claiming that, for instance, the growth of railway mileage during the twenties was substantial. Till 1923 the total mileage was around 37,000 miles,<sup>21</sup> and the same in 1929

20. *Directory of Banking in India, Pakistan, Burma and Ceylon, 1953* (Madras, 1953), pp. 19-20.

21. *India in 1922-23*, p. 178.

was nearly 41,000 miles.<sup>22</sup> This should compare very favourable with the situation in 1872 when the total railway mileage was near about 5,400 miles.<sup>23</sup>

However, if one considers only three aspects of this development, it should not be difficult to appreciate not only the meagreness of development but also its harmful consequences. First, the civic needs of transportation were grossly neglected became quite apparent from the finding of the Report of the Railway Committee presided over by Sir William Acworth.<sup>24</sup> Secondly, the above consequence flowed directly from the fact that most of the railway network was laid out mainly with a view to serving the interests of British Administration and the organized industry and foreign trade in which the British capital dominated. Thirdly, in direct contradiction to the experience of British investments in Railway in other countries like Argentina.<sup>25</sup> in India these investments led to or rather contributed to the disintegration of the small scale and village industries, thus creating more unemployment and distress.<sup>26</sup> One may be justified in suspecting that even though the intelligent British administrators could have easily anticipated the adverse consequence of the direct confrontation of their superior techniques of production with the traditional

22. *India in 1928-29*, p. 148.

23. *India in 1922-23*, p. 178.

24. *Ibid*, p. 181.

25. ".....in the Argentine, the railway is a magic talisman : for wherever it goes it entirely transforms the economic and productive conditions of the country." See A. B. Martineze and M. Lewandowski, *The Argentine in the Twentieth Century* ( London, 1911 ), p. 108.

26. We have it on the authority of Mr. L. H. Jenks that the railways in India "did not give rise to a flood of satellite innovations" and "destroyed more employment opportunities [e. g. in traditional village industries] than it] opened up." See L. H. Jenks, "British Experience with Foreign Investments", *Journal of Economic History*, 1944, Supplement, p. 75.



Indian industries, the absence of any measures to protect the latter might be due to wilful negligence.

As for road transport development, somewhat similar criticism can be made. Between 1916 and 1923 the mileage of metalled roads increased from 54,000 to only 55,000 and that of unmetalled roads for the same period increased from 142,000 to 144,000.<sup>27</sup> So the total road mileage increased by some 3,000 miles or by 1.5 per cent.<sup>28</sup> This mileage was in itself not indicative of the road facilities available to the mass of Indian peasantry especially in famine areas, hilly areas and other economically vulnerable areas.

### Trade

Most of the trade still depended to a considerable extent on British shipping. Secondly, most of the firms engaged in the commercial transactions from Indian side were still predominantly British concerns and so were the exchange banks. Moreover, due to the political and economic subordination of India to her, Britain had enjoyed a preponderant position in Indian foreign trade with other countries. Though Britain was no longer occupying the monopolistic position in India's foreign trade, still as late as 1920-21 there was 41.8 per cent and in 1925-26, 32.1 per cent share of her in the total trade of India.<sup>29</sup> One particular fact worth noting in this connection was that the share of Britain had always been large in imports than exports. The percentage share of Britain in India's import and export trade was as follows<sup>30</sup> :

27. *India in 1919*, n. 2, p. 74.

28. *India in 1922-23*, p. 178.

29. J. S. Bright, n. 5, p. 86.

30. Subhas Chandra Bose, ed., *Swadeshi and Boycott*, a collection of Statistics on Trade (Calcutta, 1931), pp. 3 and 6.

Year	Imports	Exports
1913—14	64.1	23.4
1925—26	51.4	21.9
1926—27	47.8	21.4
1927—28	47.7	25.0
1928—29	44.7	21.4

According to Subhas Bose the United Kingdom continued to control more than half of the total trade in Indian imports and occupied by far the most important position.<sup>31</sup>

The British trade and financial interests were having decisive control over India's export and import trade. These interests were backed by the British Government which adopted measures particularly favourable to them. For instance, the fixation of a particular exchange rate for the Indian rupee in terms of British pound sterling had crucial significance in enhancing the gains of the British trading and financial interests as well as the British administration. The rupee exchange rate was fixed at 1 s. 6d. because for each one rupee repatriated by these interests to the Home country i.e. U.K. the Indian people paid 2d. more.<sup>32</sup> Hundreds of crores of rupees were taken out of the country by the simple process of manipulating the exchange rate. After reading the Currency Commission Report, Gandhiji was greatly perturbed and tried to understand its mysteries by advertising in *Young India* "Wanted a Teacher".

### Fiscal Policy of the British Government in India

In the prevailing economic conditions the British Government in India realized quite a substantial revenue from the public. During the period of 1919 to 1926 the average of

31. J. S. Bright, n. 5, p. 100.

32. G. B. Jathar and K. G. Jathar, *Indian Economics* (Oxford University Press, 1957), p. 64.

the annual revenue was nearly Rs. 150 crores.<sup>33</sup> This annual revenue could meet the local requirements satisfactorily. But quite a substantial amount of it was spent on items not being of direct public utility, e.g., military expenditure, heavy salaries and pensions to the Civil Servants of English origin.

Like the pre 1919 period, there continued the annual drain of Indian money which was an absolute loss to the country. The most considerable part of the drain was constituted by the Government of India's Home charges. They were not entirely matched by any corresponding receipts by India. One of the items of the Home Charges was repayment of the debt. It may be recalled that due to the heavy and extravagant expenditure there began to pile up a debt during British rule. The figure of nearly Rs. 105 crores during Company's rule had reached over Rs. 300 crores in the twenties of the current century.<sup>34</sup> In 1929-30 the total debt figured more than Rs. 1,050 crores, nearly Rs. 540 crores was kept in Britain, bearing an interest of from  $2\frac{1}{2}$  to  $5\frac{1}{2}$  per cent.<sup>35</sup> Besides the repayment of the debt, there were also other items of expenditure leading to the drain of Indian wealth. The table on the opposite page provides an analytical account under principal heads of the expenditure of the Government of India incurred in England.<sup>36</sup>

33. See *India in 1919 and 1925-26*, following p. 57 and p. 128.

34. Shah and Khambata, n. 8, 273.

35. *Statistical Abstracts for British India 1924-25 to 1933-34* (Delhi, Government of India, 1936), pp. 357 and 364-67.

36. K. T. Shah & K. J. Khambata. n. 11, p. 273.

It may be true that out of the salaries received by the British civil and military personnel for the services rendered in India a sizable portion could have been spent in India itself, which undoubtedly would add to the Indian incomes. But it is obviously impossible, if not positively ridiculous, to hazard a guess as to the quantitative aspects of the entire proposition. [For further study of Economic exploitation see *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru* (Orient Longman 1972), Vol. 11, p. 262].

## Home Charges

Year	Debt Rs. nearly	Civil Exp. Rs. nearly	Military Exp. Rs. nearly	Stores , Rs. nearly	Misc. Rs. nearly	Total Rs. nearly
1918—19	21,28,20,000	3,85,00,500	6,27,00,500	3,21,70,500	87,48,750	35,49,40,250
1919—20	20,02,92,000	4,88,98,500	8,00,50,000	5,16,79,500	21,97,500	40,31,46,700
1920—21	19,76,80,500	5,65,16,000	11,45,11,500	9,41,14,500	1,51,36,500	47,79,59,000
1922—23						45,86,87,325

But it may also be pointed out that the table, figures excluded the Home charges of the Provincial Governments which amounted to Rs.246 lakhs according to the Revised Estimates of 1923-24.<sup>37</sup> Altogether, then, the total amount drained from India due to political causes could not be less than 50 crores.<sup>38</sup> Eminent economists Shah and Khambata characterized these Home Charges as "a mortgage charge on our national income."<sup>39</sup> Besides the Home charges, the annual drain also reflected in the form of (1) payments of interest on foreign capital invested in India; (2) payments made, directly or indirectly, on account of the shipping services; (3) payments on account of commissions for banking and allied services in connection with foreign overseas trade; (4) profits and earnings of foreign merchants, professional men, civil and military, who were not permanently domiciled in India; (5) remittances of the profits from railways.

### **Fiscal Autonomy in Practice**

It is true that in the Montford Scheme of 1919 the authors had inserted certain provisions under which the fiscal autonomy should have been introduced. But the overall prevailing political and constitutional structure of the country after the introduction of the Reforms was such that when the scheme was implemented it led to the gathering of an impression in the circles of Indian economic experts that the fiscal autonomy was just in theory and name and not in practice. For instance, K. T. Shah, who is considered one of the topmost experts of Indian economic affairs observed that given the composition of the provincial legislature, it was improbable in the consciousness of political power and a sense of governmental responsibility to develop. The fault lay much more largely in the very roots of the constitution prescribed by the Act of 1919. After elaboration with a flourish the objective of progressive responsibility in the governance of India, the authors of the

37. *Ibid.*

38. *Ibid.*

39. *Ibid.*, p. 214.

Reforms Scheme contented themselves with half-hearted responsibility in the provinces. The system of Dyarchy, Shah added, in which a certain number of the most important departments of Government were excluded from the scope of Ministerial responsibility, brought in the charge of the Indian Ministers only such departments which enjoyed "very little effective power." And if any Department provided some scope for nation-building activities, the financial conditions in almost every province were such that no real improvement could be effected. The Executive or non-responsible branch of the Government, held a "first mortgage on the provincial purse"; and their departments consumed more than half the Provincial revenues.<sup>40</sup> The Governor had extraordinary powers of certification of the Budget or of any tax, should the Legislature in a homogeneous province refuse to be docile. When these ordinary powers were thought to be inefficient, they could suspend the entire constitution as they did more than once in Bengal, or the Central Provinces, between 1921-30.

Continuing his criticism K. T. Shah added that the Governor-General, again, had still more over-riding powers. His permission was essential before the introduction of any legislative measure of importance in a provincial council; and his assent indispensable for transforming any enactment of a provincial legislature into a valid law. He enjoyed powers of promulgating ordinances overriding the law of the country. For close upon 4 years (1930-34) India was for all practical purposes governed by ordinances. From 1921, when the Reforms Scheme was implemented, to 1927 the provincial Governments had to make monetary contributions in aid of the Central Finances;

40. Likewise in his submission to the Muddiman Committee C. Y. Chintamani, a Liberal Minister in U. P., complained that reserved Departments got all the money they required, before the transferred side could obtain what was urgently needed by it. [Cited in R. N. Aggarwal, *National Movement & Constitutional Development in India* (New Delhi, 1967), p. 120].

and though these were stopped from and after that date, the sources of revenue left to the provinces, and the limitations imposed by the Devolution Rules, were such that no province could really embark upon initiating truly development projects. The central, and final authority rested undoubtedly with the Government of India, who were in no department responsible to the Indian Legislature but who were responsible to the Secretary of State for India, a British Cabinet Minister.

Continuing his observations the Indian expert further remarked that the devices, again in the Provincial as well as the Central Legislature, of a nominated element and of an Upper House in the Central Government, which contained an official majority, and could be made more submissive than the Legislative Assembly, made the expression of Indian opinion on given problems but of little real effect. The bulk of the Central Budget was totally non-votable; and that portion, which was the oratically subject to the vote of the legislative Assembly, could, in the event of an adverse vote in that body, be always adjusted to the liking of the Governor-General by the device of certification. There was, likewise, the provision in the Act of 1919, of the two chambers of the Central Legislature sitting together in the event of dissenting opinion in respect to any first class piece of legislation; but Government seldom utilized this power, as they found certification more easy and effective, thus concluded K. T. Shah.<sup>41</sup>

### **Military Expenditure**

But there was also the item of military expenditure which became a subject of strong criticism by Indians. It was alleged by them that a large share of public finance was also spent over keeping India under subjugation. The total strength of the British Regular and Territorial Army was 56,561 in 1919-20.<sup>42</sup> There was also a British Volunteers Auxiliary

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41. K. T. Shah, *Provincial Autonomy* (Bombay, 1937), pp. 38-40.

42. Stanley Reed, ed., *Indian Year Book 1922* (Bombay, 1923), pp. 196,

Force of about 29,000. The Royal Air Force in India comprised six squadrons, with more than 80 British officers and 600 British and Indians of other ranks.<sup>43</sup> All of them were paid from the Indian treasury. One British soldier was estimated to cost between three and four times as much as an Indian soldier.<sup>44</sup> The total expenditure on defence services was calculated at not less than Rs 62.20 crores in 1921-22; Rs. 55 crores in 1928-29;<sup>45</sup> as compared with Rs. 26.11 crores in 1913-14.<sup>46</sup> It figured over 40 per cent of the total expenditure according to the Budget estimates. The comparable amount for British defence budget during those years was only 12 per cent.<sup>47</sup>

For incurring annually high expenses for military purposes the British made constant strenuous claim that they were in India for her protection. The Indian people, they declared, could not protect themselves and so they were unselfishly rendering them this great service. When Indians complained about the proportion of the national revenues incurred for military expeditions the reply was given that they should not do so; all this expense was for their welfare; and it was far less than what would be incurred by them if the British were not here and they had to protect themselves. Indians should be profoundly thankful to Britain for this powerful protection. Such statements were resented by the Indians bitterly. Their reply as interpreted by J. T. Sunderland, an American sympathiser, used to be :

British, instead of being their protector, is a usurper that has deprived them of their dearest possessions

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43. Jaswant Singh, ed., *Indian Armed Forces Year Book 1955* (Bombay, 1956), p. 189.

44. *Simon Commission Report* (London, 1930) Vol. I, p. 94.

45. *India in 1928-29* (Calcutta, 1930) 294.

46. *India Year Book 1922*, p. 199.

47. Joan Beauchamp, n. 18, p. 78, Also see *Statistical Abstract for British India 1924-25 to 1993-34*, pp. 345-46,



on earth....She refuses to give these back; and therefore, the foreign nation which, far from than any other, they need to be protected from, is Britain herself.... Britain, a faraway power, having no just claim on us and no right to be on our soil, has conquered us, is holding us in subjection against our will.... All that Britain's army and navy do for India is to make more firm her grip on us.<sup>48</sup>

The Indian mercantile and capitalist classes too became more and more restive and antagonized under the impact of the British attitude. The development of nationalist movement on a wider scale gave impetus to them to raise a strong protest against the prevailing incompatibilities of their economic existence. They tended to weld together the forces in India which were enimical to foreign rule.

To arouse people's consciousness about the unbalanced position of Indian economy the experts on economic affairs tried to trace the origin of the problem by writing articles pamphlets, leaflets and booklets. Besides, there were also published a number of books detailing the excesses committed by the early rulers of the East India Company in India. In 1924 there appeared the second volume of Major B. D. Basu's book *Rise of the Christian Power in India*. Inspired by the growing fervour of nationalism the author exposed in the book the conduct of the East India Company and its principal officers, civil and military, and the criminal policy pursued by them. He proved his contention by quoting chapter and verse from official correspondence and despatches. The millions of rupees taken away from India since the establishment of the British power in India, the bribery, corruption, speculation, robbery, embezzlement were described in detail. All this stirring and provoking description of plunder and loot, moral

48. J. T. Sunderland, "How Britain gives Military Protection to India," *Modern Review* (Calcutta, 1928) Vol. XLIII, p. 277,

depravity and national humiliation were although a painful reading, yet they played an historical role in making people politically conscious of their past and present. The picture of the evils of colonialism culminating in material exploitation of Indians and moral degeneration of the Imperial masters had also been remarkably presented by George Orwell in his novel *Burmese Days*. Flory, the self-critical Englishman questioned the "usefulness" of British rule :

Bosh, my dear Doctor. We teach young men to drink whisky and play football. I admit, but precious little else. Look at our schools-factories for cheap clerks. We've never taught a single useful manual trade to the Indians. We've even crushed various industries. Where are the Indian muslins now ? Back in the forties or thereabouts they were building sea-going ships in India, and manning them as well. Now you couldn't build a seaworthy fishing boat there. In the eighteenth century the Indians cast guns that were at any rate up to the European standard. Now after we've been in India a hundred and fifty years, you can't make so much as a brass cartridge case in the whole continent. The only Eastern races that have developed at all are the independent ones. I won't instance Japan, but take the case of Siam.<sup>49</sup>

Orwell thus appeared to contend that British Imperialism in its philosophical connotation was not founded on humanistic idea of giving assistance to the under-privileged, but rather emerged from Britain's assumed moral liability for ruling over an alien race. He was highly critical of such an approach; it was, he emphasized, detrimental to good human relationships. It culminated in what E. M. Forster defined "the undeveloped heart" on the part of the Imperialists, thereby creating a sharp cleavage between the foreign ruler and the

49. George Orwell, *Burmese Days* (New York, Harpers, 1934), p. 249.

native Indian. Rather, the Indian appeared a stranger in his own homeland. The fact of being a subject, and therefore inferior, race obstructed his ethical and mental growth. He lost initiative, lacked determination, and slavishly imitated his rulers. Being a poor and indiscriminate imitator, he was made the butt of all ridicule.

Among the national-reformist leaders who protested vehemently against the economic policies of British Imperialism Gandhiji was the most prominent. He opposed the imposition of excise duty on cotton goods solely in the interests of Lancashire. He advocated its repeal. Its perpetuation appeared to him a "badge of subservience"<sup>50</sup> on India. It may be recalled that on the advice of Gandhiji, Pandit Motilal Nehru moved a motion in the Central Legislature and succeeded in removing the burden of excise duty on cloth manufactured in India by Indian mills. He also further carried through a proposal to provide adequate protection to Indian industry by having a revenue duty on all foreign imported cloth. (Similar success was also achieved in the case of cement industry). Besides, there were other members in the Central Assembly who demanded the nationalization of railways.<sup>51</sup> Outside the legislature Gandhiji appealed to the people for the organization of an effectively powerful public opinion for the full protection of cotton industry in India. To achieve this objective he gave the slogan of boycott of foreign cloth. In his view it was not purely a vindictive measure. It was an opposition really not to the foreign cloth, but to the "poverty and pauperism" which its importation brought with it. In his view, the movement of boycott was essential for national existence as breath was for life.<sup>52</sup> He also called upon the mercantile class to sell all

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50. *Young India* 1924-26, a collection of articles (Madras, 1927), p. 628.

51. For detailed study see *Legislative Assembly Debates* (1922) vol. III, p. 44; *India in 1922-23*, p. 183.

52. *Young India* (1919-22), a collection of writings and speeches (Madras, 1923), p. 553.

foreign cloth already stocked in India, preferably to alien purchasers and keep all cotton for home use. The mill owners were advised to organize their mills as national trusts. He also advised them to regulate their profits and to manufacture principally for the Indian market.<sup>53</sup>

But the most rational exposition of British Imperialism based on the scientific process of historical materialism, was made in the course of their General Statement by 13 Communists accused in the Meerut 'Conspiracy' Case. The signatories remarked :

The state in India is the weapon of a naked class dictatorship, the dictatorship of the British *Bourgeoisie*. Its form is absolutist.... Not only the form but the actual operation of the state machine is exclusively in the interests of the British *Bourgeoisie*.<sup>54</sup> Lenin in the discussion of the subject of Imperialism gives after an economic analysis the definition : "Imperialism is capitalism in that phase of development in which the domination of monopolies and Finance-Capital has established itself; in which the export of capital has acquired very great importance; in which the division of the world among the big international trusts has begun, in which the partition of all the territories of the earth among the great capitalist powers has been completed." This is the essence of Imperialism considered from an economic point of view.<sup>55</sup>

53. *Ibid*.

54. *Communists Challenge Imperialism From the Dock* (Calcutta, National Book Agency, 1967), pp. 71-2,

55. *Ibid*, p. 25.

## B—INDIAN RECIPROCITY

*Give me Khadi and I will give you Swaraj. Khadi will bring salvation to the untouchables and Khadi will maintain the Hindu-Muslim unity.... Hand spun yarn must be as current among us as small coins.*

*[The Historic Trial of Mahatma Ghandhi: A collection of his writings and speeches, (Fyzabad, 1922), pp. 44-5].*

According to the economists like Shah and Khambata, the average income for a day of an Indian was believed to be in the twenties nearly one anna and six pies.<sup>1</sup> But in the estimation of the nationalist leaders these statistics were misleading because the average income was worked out from the figures of the income of the poor person as also of the Viceroy and the millionaires. In their view the actual income could, therefore, be hardly three pice per head.<sup>2</sup> In these

1. K. T. Shah and K. J. Khambata, *Wealth and Taxable Capacity of India* (Bombay, 1924), p 200.
2. Figures cited in an article by Gandhiji in *Young India*, dated 17 March 1927; *Khadi* (Ahmedabad, 1955), p. 6.

This average income was in sharp contrast to the most fabulous wealth possessed by the princes. For instance, the late Asaf Jahi Nizam of Hyderabad, who died on 11 April 1957, alone had a collection of jewellery that had been valued at Rs. 50 crores, nearly 20 years ago. Like Cinderella's god mother he kept it strictly under

(footnote contd.)

circumstances if they could supplement that income by even three pice, pointed out the national leaders like Gandhiji, with the assistance of producing *khadi*, could they not be right in denoting the *Charkha* their "cow of plenty".<sup>3</sup> It would be making of just and equitable distribution of income. The initiators of *khadi* also argued that it could provide bread and cloth to starving villagers, livelihood to beggars and dignified profession to the prostitutes and those whose modesty was otherwise exposed to the evil designs of the lustful individuals. The spinning wheel was claimed to have the power of demolishing "devil's workshops" by keeping engaged the minds of persons who were practically idle and unemployed for four months in a year. A passionate supporter of *khadi* wrote to Gandhiji in August 1925 that it was the only insurance against poverty which was "killing the body and the soul of the nation" for at least as far as illiterate millions were concerned there could be no question of the "soul without the body".<sup>4</sup>

(previous footnote contid.)

lock and key. [For detailed study see Pavan Sahgal, 'Those Fabulous Asaf Jahi Jewels', *Times Weekly* (New Delhi), 8 October 1972, p. 17]. Sometimes in 'forties an American journalist had estimated the Nizam's wealth at \$ 2 billion. In 1945 the Government of India had valued the Nizam's wealth at Rs. 600 crores. [For detailed study see Pavan Sahgal, "The Richest Men in India", *Times Weekly* (New Delhi), 30 July 1972, pp. 1 & 3].

While more than fifty percent people of India could manage with great difficulty two meals a day, the Maharajas and Maharanis, Rajas and Ranis led a gorgeous life. The number of food dishes fixed for Maharanis was fifty to seventy served in gold plates. Ranis ate in silver plates and the number of dishes ranged between 25 and 30. The concubines were served in copper plates and the dishes were between 10 and 15. On the other hand, millions of poor people used their hands as plates and they were quite lucky if they could manage at least one full dish at a time. [Diwan Jarmani Dass & Rakesh Bhan Dass, *Maharani* (New Delhi, S. Chand & Co., 1972), p. 28].

3. M. K. Gandhi, *Khadi*, n. 2, p. 6.

4. *Young India* (1924-26), a selected collection of writings (Madras, 1927), pp. 681-82.

The nationalists also contended that a nation that was starving could have very little initiative left in it. The introduction of any reform by a foreign regime appeared to it sheer camouflage. "That winter of despair can only be", wrote Gandhiji, "turned into the sunshine of hope" for the millions only through *charkha*.<sup>5</sup> Such an achievement would be nothing less than an economic revolution.

To stop the reckless waste of human energy and to overcome the state almost of suspended animation, Gandhiji gave the call to revive indigenous economic life by turning every home into a spinning mill and every village into a weaving mill. This was the essential mission of the people if the nation wanted to survive. It was really tragic that being second only to America in cotton-growing countries India did not have sufficient cloth for its people. According to him the spinning wheel was the expression not of "commercial war" but of "commercial peace". In the absence of sufficient number of mills to produce the needed cloth the hand-woven and hand-spun yarn must be encouraged. Hand-spinning would assist in lowering the price of the yarn produced by the mills and sold at fabulous profits. Moreover, it would also reduce the amount of money which was nearly 60 crores in 1919 sent out of India for buying the cloth.<sup>6</sup> The continuation of the imported foreign cloth at such a high rate, had deprived the Indian weaver and spinner of that amount year after year, without practically providing him any alternative job. Besides, *khadi* would evolve and remodel national life on the ideals of simplicity. India would not then be dragged into the orbit of imperialism built upon exploitation of the weaker races, and the admi-

5. *Khadi*, n, 2, p. 6. See also the Story of Muslim lady weaver in Panipat in 1920 related by Khawaja Ahmad Abbas, "You are Free", *The Weekly Newsday* (New Delhi), 22 Oct. 1972, P. 7, cols 2-3.

6. *Young India* (1919-22), a selected collection of writings and speeches (Madras, 1923), p. 484.

ssion into a giddy materialistic civilization supported by naval and air forces that had made the peaceful living almost impossible.

To popularize *khadi*, Gandhiji's paper *Young India* reminded the Indian people about the days of antiquity when *khadi* was the dress of the nation at large. The old *Patels* and *Deshmukhs*, *Choudharies* and *Lambardars* looked respectable when dressed in home-spun *khadi*. The late Vidyasagar took pride in wearing throughout his life the *khadi* cloth. There were available instances of innumerable villages taking a great pride in the fact that they had to import nothing but salt in the whole round of the six seasons. A small village could make terms with its self-respect, dignity and independence.<sup>7</sup>

There also appeared a number of booklets like *Ved men Charkha*, detailing the significance of spinning wheel in Vedic times when spinning and weaving were regarded as sacrifice and commanded the protecting care of the elders.<sup>8</sup> To popularize *khadi* among the Muslims an anonymous Muslim writer quoted references from the Prophet who said that "the best occupation for a believing woman is the *Charkha*."<sup>9</sup> Commenting on the above in his book *Kita-bun Najah* (Book of Salvation), Sheikh Ebrahim Saifee had stated 250 years ago that the inventor of the *charkha* had made the instrument a replica of the physical world. It represented the world in miniature. Did not Kabir, himself a weaver, immortalize the art in his inspiring poems?<sup>10</sup>

As result of this intensive propaganda quite a large number of people belonging to various communities agreed to put on only national cloth, which gradually became the fashion all round. Spinning became obligatory on all representa-

7. *Ibid*, p. 494-95.

8. *Young India* (1927-28), a selected collection of writings and speeches (Madras, 1935), p. 200.

9. *Young India* (1919-22), n. 6, p. 498.

10. *Ibid*, pp. 498-99.



tive Congressmen. The potentialities of *khadi* in the building up of national life were shown to be quite omnipotent. The simplicity of *khadi* all round inspired people to give up luxurious tastes and soft calico like a soldier in a battle. To achieve progress they were to discard the arrogation of superiority and consequent callousness to the sufferings of the unfortunate countrymen. The leaders of the Congress thus vainly hoped that the *khadi* was to affect real unity between the various communities of India by making them interdependent. Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya vainly pledged not to rest until the *Ranis* and the *Maharanis* sit behind the handlooms and weave cloth for the nation. He advised them to follow the illustration of Aurangzeb who prepared his own caps. In his view even the queens of Europe, before the introduction of machinery, spun yarn and considered it a noble and respected profession.<sup>11</sup> Such persuasions did bear some insignificant results when women like Mrs. Nanekbai Bahadurji, the Begum Saheba of Junjira and her sister Mrs. Atia Begum Rahiman also undertook to learn spinning. Some women of *bourgeois* and feudal origin who had never worn anything but the finest silk or Dacca muslin and who probably could not bear the weight of heavy coarse *khadi*, did appear in *khadi* dresses but only during the celebrations of the National Week or political conferences of the Congress and the parades of the national volunteer corps. Their *khaddar* dress appeared to impress their audiences more than their speeches and songs. Gradually some of these women also introduced *khadi* in their domestic use. The preparation of towels, wipers, teak cloth, satchels, bedsheets, holdalls, carpet pieces, cushions, covers for furniture, etc. with *khadi* cloth was gradually introduced. It was taken by the Congress leaders as nothing but a "silent yet effective revolution" in the country.<sup>12</sup> There are also instances when in the Gurudwaras and festi-

11. *Ibid.*

12. *Ibid.*, pp. 448-51.

vities in the mosques the foreign silk cloth was substituted by the *khadi* cloth. It had become one of the essential objects of *Pratishthans*. It is also true that *khadi* ameliorated to some extent the conditions of untouchables by making it possible to find a market for the yarn spun by them. It also provided employment to a large number of blind people on a considerable scale. They got a great consolation out of this work. This transformation had led the blind to believe that every thread he was spinning would make a significant contribution to the task of national reconstruction. An anonymous correspondent gave expression to the blindmen's sentiment by despatching the following verse of Helen Hunt Jackson to *Young India* in August 1923:

I know not why, but I am sure—  
that, time and place,  
In some great fabric to endure  
Past time and race,  
My threads will have; so from the first  
though blind, I never felt accrust.<sup>13</sup>

To popularize *Khadi* the Congress workers sold it on the roads and streets. Prominent leaders like C.R. Das and Motilal Nehru hawked *Khaddar* in their respective cities.<sup>14</sup> To encourage production the Congress workers also organized exhibitions displaying the various products and held competitive tests and annual conferences at the various centres of *Khadi* production.

With the intensive inculcation of the *Khadi* spirit, field work, and publicity in the press there came to be established a number of *Ashrams*, *Pratishthans*, Boards, *Bhandars* and *Mandals* all over the country producing and supplying *Khaddar* as a permanent supplementary industry for the agriculturists.

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13. *Young India* (1927-28), n. 8, pp. 321-25.

14. *Young India* (1924-26), n. 4, p. 757.

Their branches were founded in various regions—both urban and rural. All these organizations worked under the All-India Spinners Association founded in 1925. Municipal schools also introduced it. The popularity of the movement can be gauged from the fact that while the production of *Khadi* in 1924-25 was in worth of Rs. 19,03, 034<sup>15</sup> and sold at a considerable profit, from 1926 to 1930 the average annual production was worth Rs. 1,53,72,833 and sold at the profit price of Rs.203, 59,517.<sup>16</sup> It is estimated that the All-India Spinners Association placed approximately 1,26,00,000 sq. yards of cotton *Khadi* alone in the markets annually.<sup>17</sup> It is true that these figures of *Khaddar* production if compared with the Indian production of machine made cloth which in 1928-29 were 5,638 thousand bales of 420 lbs. each,<sup>18</sup> or for that matter in any other year under study, are insignificant. Yet without denying the the positive contribution of the textile industry to the growth of the *Swadeshi* movement, it can safely be stated that the production of *khadi* rather than that of the textile mills, proved emotionally a more effective instrument in drawing the people to the cause of nationalism. A person putting on *Khadi* clothes was revered more as a fighter for freedom than one wearing mill cloth. Secondly, the *Khadi* movement had also a sociological aspect in a backward economy. The production of a square yard of *Khadi* provided employment to more people in comparison to the production of the same quantity of cloth in a textile mill.

15. Ibid, p.722.

16. Figures quoted by Dr. Rajendra Prasad in his preface to *Economics of Khadi*, a collection of Gandhiji's writings (Ahmedabad, 1941), p. viii.

17. *Report of the Sub-Committee on Rural and Cottage Industries appointed by the A.I.C.C. National Planning Committee in 1938* (Bombay, 1940), p. 85.

18. *The Indian Year book 1930* (Bombay, The Times of India Press), p. 751.

With the organization of *charkha* work there developed a spirit of national uplift. A social worker started building up a programme of anti-malaria campaign, improved sanitation, peaceful settlement of village disputes, conservation, breeding of cattle and hundreds of other similar beneficial and ameliorative works and activities. And in this way keeping one busy, Gandhiji gave him the exhilarating idea that he was serving the great cause of the spiritual, economic and political regeneration of his "Motherland".<sup>19</sup> Gandhiji thus roused one to activity in all social issues like the removal of untouchability, propagation of Hindi and other activities of social reform. He made one feel the sense of doing all these things as the necessary preparation for the struggle for *Swaraj*. Behind all the various schemes of the constructive programme was the message of defiance of imperialism. It was through this planning that Gandhiji could prepare thousands of determined cadres for the national movement under his leadership, who were enthused with the spirit of dedication and sacrifice.

It should, however, be clearly pointed out that this *khadi* programme could not wither away the prejudices of certain sections of India intelligentsia which were inspired by the ideologies of violent revolution or Marxism. Once during the days of Non-Co-operation Movement when Gandhiji was in Calcutta, he visited the office of *Servant* paper. Among those who accompanied him were also Shyam Sunder Chakravarti, Bengal PCC President and renowned Bengalee writer Sharat Chandra Chatterji. Arriving at the office of the paper the Mahatma expressed his desire to spin along with others. The spinning wheels (*Charkhas*) were brought and all of them started spinning. The Mahatma had got sharp eyes. Immediately he marked that Sharat Chatterji's spinning thread was extremely beautiful. Quite

19. *Khadi*, n. 2, p. 10.

contrary to him the PCC President was spinning very thick. In a voice full of humour Gandhiji observed, "Oh! see! the PCC President is spinning like a rope." On listening it everybody laughed heartily. Immediately Sharat remarked: "The more one is nearer the temple, the further he is away from God."

Mahatmaji said, : "Sharat Babu, you don't have faith in *charkha*?"

Sharat : "No, not at all."

Mahatma : "But you spin much better than many devotees or lovers of *charkha*."

Sharat : "It is not *charkha* but you that I love. That is why I have learnt spinning."

The Mahatma laughed and said : But you don't believe that spinning will help us in gaining *swaraj*."

Sharat also laughed and replied: "No Sir, I don't believe. I think that only soldiers, and not spinning wheels, can help us in gaining *swaraj*."

Critics admitted that Gandhiji did prepare hundreds of determined cadres for the national movement, but they charged that such cadres "were the least 'tainted' with the 'sin' of that revolutionary fervour which may endanger the very existence of the class which Gandhiji represented."<sup>21</sup> The critics also pointed out that though speaking in the name of, and in a language understandable to, the masses of the toiling people, Gandhiji was firmly opposed to anything that would rally the masses against the existing social system.<sup>22</sup> To support their contention the critics cited Gandhiji's

20. *Saptahik Hindustan* (New Delhi), 16 July 1972, p. 48, col. 3.

21. Comment made by E. M. S. Namboodiripad, *The Mahatma and the Ism* (People's Publishing House, 1958), p. 38.

22. *Ibid*, p. 37.

reply to Saklatwala, who visited India in 1927 and had a long interview with him. It may be recalled that at the time of this interview Gandhiji conceded that "Comrade Saklatwala is dreadfully in earnest. His sincerity is transparent. His passion for the poor is unquestioned". But, said Gandhiji, "comrade Saklatwala disdains to study facts", "ignores India and Indian conditions".<sup>23</sup>

And the "facts" and "Indian conditions" which Saklatwala ignored, were revealed by Gandhiji thus:

I do not regard capital to be the enemy of labour. I hold their co-ordination to be perfectly possible. The organization of the labour that I undertook in South Africa, Champaran or Ahmedabad was in no spirit of hostility to the capitalists. The resistance in each case, and to the extent it was thought necessary, was wholly successful. My ideal is equal distribution but so far as I can see it is not to be realised. I, therefore, work for equitable distribution. This I seek to attain through *khaddar*; and since its attainment must sterlise British exploitation at its centre, it is calculated to purify the British connection. Hence in this sense *khaddar* leads to *swaraj*.<sup>24</sup>

Interpreting this statment by Gandhiji the communist leader E. M.S. Namboodiripad remarked that the *Khadi* programme was a programme of organizing labour-capital coordination and the "purification" of the British connection.<sup>25</sup>

Likewise, C. G. Shah has considerably been a critique of Gandhism since 1926 when he wrote his most famous article "Hundred per cent Indian". In his critical appraisal the author holds that like every other ideology such as

23 Ibid.

24. D. G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma* (Bombay, 1951) Vol. II, p. 340.

25. E. M. S. Namboodiripad, n. 20, p. 38.

Liberalism, Fascism, Marxism and others, Gandhism "rose out of socio-historical soil". He adds that like any of these ideologies, it too has a "class character and content". To comprehend the rise of Gandhism, therefore, it is also essential to have a grasp of the historical position and the interests of the particular class of that society of which it was the specific ideology. Elaborating his viewpoint Shah contends that as an ideology, Gandhism passed through two phases of development : one extending from about 1904 to 1920 and another covering the subsequent period. He adds that during the first phase, Gandhism had a *petty-bourgeois* social basis. "It expressed the interests and aspirations of the middle classes of the *old* Indian society, especially its artisan and peasant sections, which were substantially ruined as a result of the influx of cheap machine-made goods of modern foreign and Indian industries and heavy land tax respectively."<sup>26</sup>

It is, however, to be remembered, that this phase of Gandhian economy was made operative on an extensive scale only during the period beginning with the Non-Co-operation Movement.

According to Shah, the second phase of Gandhism began in 1920 when Gandhiji himself moved the Resolution on *Swadeshi* (for nation's support to the growing industrialization of India) at the Calcutta Congress and thus he also demanded modern industrialization. The author remarks that "*petty-bourgeois* Gandhism, which had hitherto crusaded against modern machine-based industry, was transformed into full-fledged bourgeois Gandhism expressing the interests and aspirations of the Indian *bourgeoisie* as it was historically circumstanced."<sup>27</sup> The key to understanding such a transformation, in the view of Shah, lay in Gandhiji's basic class affiliation to the *bourgeoisie*. With his

26. C.G. Shah, *Marxism, Stalinism, Gandhism* (Bombay, Popular Prakashan, 1963), pp. 278-79.

27. *Ibid*, p. 279.

social origin in a *bourgeois* family, with his having imbibed *bourgeois* education in a *bourgeois* educational centre in England, and further, with his intimate social contacts with the Indian *bourgeoisie*, such a transformation was easily explicable. Concluding his stand-point Shah adds :

With this transformation, Gandhi was restored to his class, the Indian bourgeoisie. Thenceforward, he remained a domicile in the camp of his class, even became its outstanding ideological, political and practical leader.

Why do we characterize Gandhism of the post-First World War period bourgeois Gandhism ?

It is because reconstructed Gandhism of this phase embodied the very consciousness of the Indian bourgeoisie, its fundamental class interests and yearnings, its basic class needs.<sup>28</sup>

In his evaluation of Gandhism C. G. Shah concurs with Namboodiripad that it propounded the theory of class collaboration. And he adds that in class-stratified society, which is based on the subjection of one class by the other, such a theory can only serve the interests of the exploiting classes, can only instigate the victims of exploitation to fraternize with their exploiters, can only chain the slaves to their masters and perpetuate the exploitative society. Further, it can "shackle" the exploited classes to the political class in the national liberation struggle.<sup>29</sup>

It is an undeniable fact that led by Gandhiji the Indian *bourgeoisie*, sandwiched between the pressure, did succeed to a considerable extent in its mission of averting a socialist revolution. For example, the economic interest of the Indian *bourgeoisie* lay in developing machine-based industries which would

28. Ibid, p. 281.

29. Ibid, p. 282-3.



inevitably pave the way to the increasing ruin of cottage industries. But it also required to divert the unrest of the poverty-stricken peasants and craftsmen in a safe direction. In the programme formulated by its great leader Gandhiji, therefore, both rapid industrialization and<sup>30</sup> revival of the *charkha* were juxtaposed though, in relation to the economic reality, they acquired the importance of being contraposed.

Similarly another critique of Gandhian economy, Indulal K. Yajnik remarked in bitter sarcasm :

Not Boycott or non-co-operation not Civil Disobedience or passive resistance, but hundred per cent charkha would be the clarion call of the new Congress...Little did he (Gandhiji) perhaps himself realise that he was really seeking to strengthen the counter-revolutionary front by allying the Congress not only with the capitalist and middle classes but even the landlords and the princes on the illusory basis of the spinning wheel.<sup>31</sup>

To substantiate his criticism the author quoted the article of Gandhiji entitled "one programme" appearing in *Young India* on 10 July 1924.

It is not incidental to point out that the popularization of the *Swadeshi* movement annoyed the British. The wearing of white caps by Government servants, boys studying in Government schools, the clerks and employees serving in British and European firms and railway companies, was officially regarded as an offence. In provinces like C. P. the decision of the Government came to be publicly endorsed by the Legislative Councils. The use of the white cap and *khadi* came to be considered the badge of non-co-operators. *Swadeshi* became

30. The development of modern industries has been very well described by Beauchamp, *British Imperialism in India* (London, 1934), pp. 8-66.

31. Indulal K. Yajnik, *Gandhi As I Knew Him* (Delhi, 1943), p. 363.

than “a sin in the Government dictionary.”<sup>32</sup> The offenders were either penalized by the Judiciary, discharged or dismissed from their respective employments. Persons wearing *khadi* clothes seeking employment in any of the alien agencies came to be regarded seditious and dangerous. By special circulars the Government servants were prevented from contributing to the *khaddar* movement which was considered a part of the political movement going on in the country. It was alleged to have some political bearing, directly or indirectly. Gandhiji condemned the repressive measures as servile and dangerous. In his view such insults were more humiliating for the country than physical aggression. He called upon the troubled people to have courage enough to retain their freedom of putting on any dress even at the risk of being dismissed from their jobs. He also advised the boycott of European firms to retaliate against their punitive measures.<sup>33</sup>

32. M. K. Gandhi, *Economic and Industrial Life and Relations* (Ahmedabad, 1951), Vol. III, p. 4.

33. Ibid, p. 12.

### CHAPTER III

## SOCIAL REFORMS

*Rally under the flag of social reform. Throw your strong arms round the sick and weary, to cheer the faint and to lighten the burden of those whose future is black and hopeless.*

*[An extract from the address of Mrs. Sarla Devi Chaudhuri at the annual session of the Indian Social Conference, held on 31st December 1925, Indian Quarterly Register, July-December, 1925, (Calcutta) Vol. II, p. 399].*

### Introduction

The socio-religious reform movements like Brahmo Samaj, Ramakrishna Mission, Arya Samaj, organized in pre-Gandhian phase got a further impetus with the wider participation of the masses in the Non-Co-operation Movement. There developed a new socio-political consciousness among the people of all classes, castes and religions. The whole corpus of theological doctrines, ecclesiastical forms and social conventions prevalent in the Indian society came to be questioned in regard to their validity in the prevailing circumstances. Professional social reformers pointed out to the people their discrepancies and exhorted them to get rid of their lukewarm attitude and demanded a reorganization of the social set-up in the light of the new developments taking place all over the country. Society was to be brought up to modern conditions of life and all old-fashioned ideas outliving the conditions to which they applied, were to be purged. Only then could all the forces in India be united for the progress of the country.

In the view of the reformers the society was to be freed from every sort of socio-religious barrier. Traditional values holding the supremacy of one social community over the other were to be eradicated. Everybody was to share the best with one another, thus adding to the sum total of human perfection. Morality and religion should appeal to reason. The social spirit should be rescued from corrupt practices. In the words of Tagore, no political "miracle of freedom" could be built upon the "quick-sand of social slavery."<sup>1</sup> This approach accelerated process of considering the socio-religious problems as an integral entity of the nationalist movement.

### Caste

It was the traditional institution of caste which appeared to the forces of national regeneration the most obstructive to the task of national progress. They organized their campaign against the institution with an idea of providing a new sociological interpretation of the formation of the Hindu social polity. They contended that caste was a peculiar social phenomenon which had lost vitality possessed by it in the days of antiquity. The rationals of purification and taboo had led to the transformation of the old social division into an inelastic and static institution. The castes were no longer synonymous with the traditional *Varnas*. The principle of social exclusiveness substituted class vanity for patriotism. It had impoverished India physically by fostering a marriage system which was thoroughly unhealthy both in its objectives and restrictions. It had corrupted her morally by making her insensate arrogance a religious and social duty. It had paralysed the nation intellectually by

1. Extract reproduced in *Indian Review* (Madras, 1929) Vol. XXX, p. 66. Tagore continues : "The educated community of India has become insensible to her social need. They are talking the very immobility of our social structure as the sign of their perfection. Therefore, they think that all their energies need their only scope in the political field. It is like a man whose legs have become shrivelled and useless, trying to delude himself that these limbs have grown still because they have attained their ultimate perfection." [*Ibid*].

compelling her to keep her thinking engaged with infantile rules and to consider them' as the most essential interest in life. It had atrophied the Indian people for political purposes. It had been the basic factor behind India's susceptibility to foreign invaders and her often surrender to them. Constantly divided social order led in modern times to economic backwardness and failure. Even if some advantages might be shown to have been attained from the application of the institution, they were nothing as compared to the disadvantages it had entailed upon the country. If Hinduism had been in other respects a tolerant and progressive religion, its intimate association with the caste had rendered it a calamity to the people. The adherents to the caste system had not the sagacity of political vision to appreciate the far-reaching impact of the new epoch-making national movement. In the course of his presidential address delivered at the meeting of the All-India National Social Conference held on 25 December, 1928 M. R. Jayakar stated :

Castes are like the great river Ganges, fed by Himalayan snow flakes as also by the soils of squalid towns....Castes make their colour like a river, from the soil through which they advance, and their time function is to lose themselves in the swelling current of national life, fertilizing individual effort and not to run a solitary course to disappear in the barren sands of conceit and futility.<sup>2</sup>

In a resolution passed at its 1925 session the Social Conference urged that the baneful restrictions of caste should be relaxed so as to promote the growth of nationality and the up-building of society on the foundation of justice.<sup>3</sup>

2. *Indian Quarterly Register*, July-December, 1928 ( Calcutta ) Vol. II, p. 473. Also see other similar speeches delivered at other annual sessions and published in the above journal.

3. *Ibid* , July-December 1925, Vol. II, p.399. Also see the resolution passed at the 1928 session and published in the above journal, *Ibid*, pp. 476-77.

Pressed by the political circumstances, like their predecessors the social reformers of the period under study, who were simultaneously engaged in the task of national independence from alien domination, had also begun to point out that the institution of caste must give way before the progressive ideals of liberty and democracy. The caste and democracy were incompatible forces, utterly opposed to and completely destructive of each other. While democracy laid down the law of equality of opportunity to everybody the caste system manifested the preservice of its own strength. In fact, the principle of social inequality operated against the vast majority of the people. The higher castes comprised only a small minority of the upper classes. The reformers demanded that there should develop a new social democracy where social set-up represented not only symbolically but in real sense of the term, the organized strength of all the people. No single person or caste should be permitted to have an inherent authority over his fellows or other castes. There should be an assimilation of various caste interests.

The minimization of caste distinctions was to a considerable extent the result of Mahatma Gandhi's endeavours. Thus while he led the struggle for political freedom of 400,000,000 Indians he vigorously pleaded for the social freedom of 300,000,000 Hindus. In fact the long line of the nineteenth century culminated in Mahatma Gandhi.<sup>4</sup> Though in the beginning he was in favour of maintaining the caste system, yet he had realized the futility of divine sanctions to separate man from man on the basis of birth. To him also discriminations based on caste appeared to be illegal and outmoded. According

4. "Gandhiji was like a river into which all great tributaries of previous centuries flowed and which itself flowed irresistibly on carrying the nation with it, to the heaven of independence," remarked K.P.S. Menon in his Sardar Patel Memorial lectures at New Delhi on 13 December, 1962. [ *The Statesman* (New Delhi), 14 December 1962, p. 3, col. 8].

to him occupation should play an important part in the formation of four divisions because performance of one's duty was more important than one's caste. In its performance no one was superior or inferior. The groups were merely for different occupation. They laid down duties but they conferred no privileges. In his view it was possible for a *sadhu*, for example, to become a *vaishya*. One who performed the duty of a *Brahmin* would easily become one in the next incarnation. But according to Dr. Lohia, Gandhiji did not appear to have been aware of the full implications of the caste system right up to a few years before his demise. He began with some sort of a romantic idealization of it. He attempted to tear it of its evils, as though the thing was not evil in itself. It was only some time around the last struggle for freedom, the open rebellion of 1942, that he realized the inherent evil of the caste system. Thus he changed his position only a few years before his death, when he became a revolutionary also in respect of caste. It was too late then. The weakness of his earlier position had already caused a "basic anemia in the nationalist movement."<sup>5</sup>

### Untouchability

But it is an undeniable fact that Gandhiji devoted himself to the eradication of untouchability. And he was as radical in this matter as anybody else could be. He issued passionate appeals, lamented, expressed indignation and disapproved the social inequality expressed against untouchables by the *Svarn* Hindu. He declared to give up his Hindu religion if any one could prove to him that untouchability was one of its dogmas. He believed that without the removal of untouchability *Swaraj* would be meaningless. The unjust system of untouchability justified, in his view, every wrong deed that had been inflicted on the Indian nation by the Western imperialist system. He declared almost emphatically :

5. Ram Manohar Lohia, *Gulity Men of India's Partition* (Allahabad, 1960) pp. 64-5.

If the Indians had become the pariahs of the Empire, it is justest retribution meted out to us by God....We must first cast out the beam of untouchability from our own eyes before we attempt to remove the mote from that of our masters. Untouchability has degraded us, made us pariah in the South Africa, East Africa, Canada. We are no better than brutes until we have purged ourselves of the sins we have committed against our weaker brethren.<sup>6</sup>

Presiding over the session of the Depressed Classes Conference on 25 December 1920, Mahatma Gandhi held untouchability the greatest sin of India practised under the guise of Hinduism. In his address he also warned both the depressed and oppressive classes in India to endeavour for the removal of untouchability as an ordeal of self-purification and self-elevation.<sup>7</sup> Delivering a fiery speech in the same session Chhaganlal Fakirjee characterized untouchability as "our own Rowlatt Act."<sup>8</sup> In a resolution moved at the same conference it was resolved that the depressed classes, in view of their most heroic loyalty to Hindu religion and the Indian nation, be forthwith granted full rights of religious and civic fellowship by their unrestricted admission to all public places of religious worship and secular usage.<sup>9</sup>

In all sincerity Gandhiji prayed to be reborn an untouchable so that he might share their sorrows, sufferings and the affronts levelled at them, in order that he might endeavour to free himself and them from their deteriorated condition.<sup>10</sup> He

6. M.K. Gandhi, *The Removal of Untouchability* (Ahmedabad, 1954 ed.) pp. 10 & 13.
7. Summary Report of the proceedings of the Session of the Depressed Classes Conference held at Calcutta, published in *Indian Review* (Madras, 1921) Vol. XXII, p. 71.
8. *Ibid.*
9. *Ibid.*
10. Gandhi, n. 6, p. 3. See also his reference to his childhood incident, pp. 3-4.



strongly criticized any one born in Hinduism and behaving like arrogant foreign rulers towards untouchables. "Have we not practised," he wrote, "Dyerism and O'Dwyerism on our own kith and kin....That nation would be blotted out of the face of the earth which pinned its faith to injustice, untruth or violence."<sup>11</sup> In his writings and speeches he also advised not to adopt the superiority complex towards them. Hindus must treat them as their "blood-brothers" as they were in fact. They must return to them the inheritance of which they had "robbed" them. And this must not be the act of a few English-knowing reformers merely, but a conscious voluntary effort on the part of the masses.<sup>12</sup> In his view the untouchability merely displayed the immobility of mind and false self-conceit of the Hindus. To remove the stigma of untouchability he adopted a pariah girl as his own daughter. His *varnashrama* accommodated many Panchma families with whom he dined with greatest pleasure.<sup>13</sup>

Thus the issue of untouchability became a national one due to his endeavours. His efforts for its eradication through his papers like *Young India*, *Navajivan* and *Harijan* were constant. He also toured all over the country in order to impress upon the people the illegality of untouchability. In his tour he was always seen stretching his hand from his third-class compartment to collect monetary assistance for the untouchables.

Mahatma Gandhi prevailed over members of the Indian National Congress to better the lot of untouchables by provi-

11. *Ibid*, pp.5 & 7

12. *Ibid*, p. 6.

13. Mahatma Gandhi wrote in *Young India* dated 24 November 1927 : "Varna has nothing to do with caste. Caste is an excrescence, just like untouchability upon Hinduism. All the excrescence that masquerades in the guise of Varna, is the travesty of Varna that has degraded Hinduism and India " [Jag Parvesh Chander, ed., *Gita : The Mother* ; a collection of Mahatma Gandhi's writings (Lahore, 1944), p. 106].

ding a number of socio-economic amenities such as opening of new schools for them and their children, and by permitting them to take water from public wells and allowing them to enter the temples and walk on the public roads prohibited for those people since generations by the orthodox sections of the Hindus. In fact, the removal of untouchability was one of the fourteen major points of the non-co-operation programme chalked out by Gandhiji to be followed and practised sincerely by every member of the National Congress. In 1920 the National Congress in a resolution clearly emphasized the admission of the depressed classes to Hindu temples. The endeavours made for eradication of untouchability got further impetus in 1922 when Gandhiji gave the country the Bardoli programme, on which the first item was the removal of untouchability. The multitudinous gatherings at the annual session of the Congress drawn from every part of the nation created an environment in which social inhibitions in matters like eating and meeting on the traditional caste basis, were no longer probable. A Brahmin delegate sat along with an untouchable delegate on the same floor, in the same row at the time of eating the food or listening to some lecture. Moreover, the speeches delivered in the session assisted to a considerable extent in removing the social distinctions.<sup>14</sup> Likewise, the Swarajist Party gave special emphasis on the removal of untouchability and inter-dining in its programme.

14. See the *Report of the thirty-ninth session of the Indian National Congress held at Belgaum on the 26th and 27th December 1926*, p. 96.

In a resolution passed at the Congress held in 1924 was stated that the Congress noted with satisfaction the progress made in Hindu opinion regarding the removal of untouchability but was of opinion that much yet remained to be done and therefore appealed to all the Hindu members of Congress organisation to make a greater effort in the cause. A similar resolution was passed at the 1924 session of the Hindu Mahasabha. [*Summary Report of the proceedings of the Conference of Mahasabha*, published in *Indian Review* (Madras, 1925) Vol. XXVI, p. 103].

Against the removal of untouchability the movements were also launched by Congressmen and other social reformers. After the session of the Depressed Classes Conference was over in 1920, Narayan Chandravarkar organised a procession of 5,000 on the forbidden road to Cochin Fort. Four years later on 30 March, 1924 the Kerala Congress Committee decided to organize a *satyagraha* in Vykom, a village in Travancore where the road to temple had been forbidden to the untouchables. The agitation pulled on for nearly a year. There was also sent a Sikh *jatha* from Punjab to participate in the movement. The movement produced considerable social and political consciousness all over the country and succeeded in introducing a change in the attitude of the State authorities in Travancore. Gandhiji eulogized the movement as the beginning of a glorious struggle for the purity of Hinduism. He wrote in *Young India* :

The leaders of the movement....have dealt it (untouchability) a death-blow at least in that part of India....There can now be no receding....The Satyagrahis are certain to break the wall of prejudice...they will melt the stoniest hearts....Victory of Vykom will no doubt shake the citadel of sacerdotal superstition in general.<sup>15</sup>

In his view the loss even of a few hundred lives would not be too great a price to pay for the freedom of the untouchables. Gandhiji also believed that the Vykom *satyagrahis* were fighting a battle of no less significance than that of *Swaraj*. The grossest ignorance must disappear before the "rising sun of suffering" without anger and malice. In his view the public opinion was a mightier force than that of "gunpowder".<sup>16</sup>

Besides Gandhiji and the National Congress the Indian National Social Conference also displayed keen interest in the eradication of untouchability. It campaigned regularly in its sessions against the "evil custom" of regarding some castes

15. Gandhi, n.6, pp. 117, 125, 127.

16. *Ibid*, pp. 129-30. See also Y.B. Mathur, *Muslims & Changing India*, p. 30.

as untouchables. It also considered it unjust, degrading and humiliating for Indian nation. In its regular sessions it urged that measures should be instituted for improving the condition of these neglected classes of the society. In a message despatched to its annual sessions held at Amritsar in 1919 Mr. Chandravarkar demanded the enlargement of the meaning and scope of social reform. He requested the social reformers to extend their activities to spheres like the education of masses, the sanitation of the country, the housing of the poor, the looking-after of the ill and weak, the employment of the poor proletariat in factories on national basis, the ample amenities for health, recreation and pleasure for the poor, sanitation and education in rural areas instead of confining it to only the female section in the urban centres. He called upon for purifying and elevating the entire political, civic and industrial aspect of the nation by encouraging to develop its internal social forces.<sup>17</sup> Like him others also emphasized the same thing in the concurrent session. They felt humiliated to see one-fifth of Hindus submerged in conditions of serfdom. A resolution moved on untouchability at the 1922 session pointed out that the further progress of Hindus law was impossible without its codification.<sup>18</sup>

Though the liberals were conservative in their political approach towards Indian problems, they were considered to be socially more progressive than the militant Hindu nationalist leaders. After their separation from the Indian national Congress in 1919 their disapproval of the national programme of non-cooperation had brought them much discredit. However, their progressive social outlook was highly valued all over

17. *Summary Report of the proceedings of session of the Indian Social Conference*, published in *Indian Review* (Madras, 1922) Vol. XXIII, p. 45.
18. *Summary Report of the proceedings of the Nagpur Social Conference*, held in 1922, published in *Indian Review* (Madras, 1923) Vol. XXIV, p. 30. Also see the *Summary Report of the proceedings of the fourth session of the Social Workers Conference*, published in *Indian Review* (Madras, 1924) Vol. XXV, p. 46.

the country. In social sphere they held a viewpoint which regarded the caste system as narrow, rigid and anti-national in character. They were strongly against the perpetuation of untouchability.<sup>19</sup>

The Congress leaders also persuaded the members of the All-India Hindu Mahasabha to interest themselves in the anti-untouchability movement. Under the apprehension that a large number of untouchables were being converted by the followers of other religions in India like Christianity, the orthodox-minded upper class Hindus tended to display a change in their social behaviour towards the untouchables. Presiding over the annual session of the All-India Hindu Mahasabha held at Gaya on 30 December, 1922 Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya appealed for the removal of untouchability by means of a feeling of love for the untouchables and lifting them up. He entreated them to improve their position and not to let them "fall a prey" to other religions which were converting them.<sup>20</sup> At the tenth session of the All-India Hindu Mahasabha held at Patna on 16 April, 1927 Dr. B.S. Moonje condemned in strong terms the hereditary untouchability. Unequivocally he declared Hindus to be unfit "to wreck British rule." He quoted a number of Sanskrit texts from the *Dharma Sastras* and other Hindu scriptures to prove that there was no meaning in the perpetuation of caste differences and in permanently disabling a certain section of the society by the institution of untouchability. He also reminded the audience that by the process of education and learning the lowest could rise to the highest.<sup>21</sup> At its

19. See the resolution passed at the eighth session of the National Liberal Federation held on 26-30 December, 1925, *Indian Quarterly Register* (Calcutta, 1925) Vol. II, p. 389.

20. *Summary Report of the proceedings of the annual session of the All-India Hindu Mahasabha*, published in *Indian Review* (Madras, 1923) Vol. XXIV, p. 27.

21. *Indian Quarterly Register*, January-June 1927 (Calcutta) Vol. I, p. 417. Also see the same journal of July-December 1925, Vol. II, p. 349.

11th session held at Jubbalpore in April 1928 the Hindu Mahasabha also called upon *purohits* (priests), barbers and washermen to offer their services to the untouchables. In another resolution it appealed to the municipal boards to provide clean and healthy residential quarters to the untouchables. It also declared the practice of nomination of the representatives of the depressed classes by the Government to the local bodies, Provincial Councils and Assembly as "most harmful and injurious to the true interest of the country". It considered that practice to become a source of creating alienation between the other Hindus and the untouchables.<sup>22</sup>

The movement against the untouchability did not remain confined to a particular community, especially the Hindu. It was supported by every enlightened community with certain exceptions of the conservative hierarchy in each one of them. It appears, however, that the movement was motivated not always with a genuine sense of human welfare. There appeared to be certain disguised political motives behind it. Specially among the Muslims there appeared to be a section which by raising the demand of elevation of untouchables, wanted either to bring them in its own fold in order to increase its strength numerically and to compete and balance with the majority community of Hindus in matters of political representation, or if this was not possible at least to divide them from the Hindus and raise them as a separate socio-religious community in order to decrease the power of Hindus in matters of political representation. Whatever might be the motives, an interest in the problem was definitely indicated. Presiding over the thirtyfifth sitting of the All-India Mohamedan Education Conference held at Aligarh on 28 December, 1922 Khan Bahadur Mian Fazali Hussain, Minister for Education in Punjab, disapproved the continuation of untouchability. He stated:

22. Full text of these resolutions reproduced in *Modern Review* [Calcutta, 1928] Vol. XLIV, p. 603.

The existence of millions of untouchables in this country may or may not be a disgrace to Hinduism, but it is certainly a blot on the fair name of Islam. Hinduism may find shelter under its faith, which considers certain people as untouchables, and the Hindus may plead that their religion does not allow them to take the untouchables within their fold; but can you plead the same justification? You know fully well that no human being is or can be untouchable. An important ideal of Islam's education is that its votaries shall go forth into the world, carrying with them the humble resolve to serve their fellow-beings, "Hold up the weak, heal the sick, bind the broken, bring back the outcaste, seek the lost."<sup>23</sup>

Despite all these endeavours, however sincere they might have been, both the anti-caste and anti-untouchability campaigns did not make much headway. Apparently both the campaigns appeared to be much more widespread than they actually were. An attitude of defensive purity on the part of the majority of the people of the privileged castes could not break the state of total unrelatedness that had existed in the shape of castes and untouchability over the centuries. The symptoms of this defensive purity are unfortunately visible still after the passage of more than twenty-five years of Indian independence. According to Dr. Lohia the total loss of identification between higher and lower castes produced an environment of great unreality, of lying and double dealing, of tensions that became a normal part of mind, of readiness to "whine and threatening, bullying, or assaulting", of great bravery without tenacity and cowardice without total submission, of the privileged castes. Mahatma Gandhi did not

23. *Summary Report of the Proceedings of the annual sitting of the Mohamadan Educational Conference held at Aligarh*, published in *Indian Review* (Madras 1923) XXIV, 46. See also the controversy over the conversion of untouchables between Arya Samajis and Muslims described by Y. B. Mathur, *Muslims and changing India* (New Delhi, 1972), pp. 189-90.

take any concrete step to alter this character with a deliberate motive for a long period.<sup>24</sup>

But it may also be pointed out that Mahatma Gandhi or any other leader for that matter, could not do much in the given situation due to the very nature of the national movement which depended for its success on the preponderant support—financial as well as active—of the privileged castes. The economic position of these privileged castes provided ample opportunities to them to lead a decent life—with good houses to live and clean clothes to put on—in sharp contrast to the lower castes which were leading an unhygienic life due to poverty and squalor. To make the latter castes acceptable as equal by the former needed economic reform. But the introduction of any such reform would have curtailed the financial privileges of the upper castes for which majority of them did not appear to be ready.

### **Women**

By the persistent endeavours of social organizations like *Bharat Stri Mahamandal* 1910, *women's Indian Association* 1917 in the past there developed a new social awakening among women. The various socio-religious reform movements in India as well as abroad, also gave a considerable impetus to the growth of this consciousness. A realization of their larger life and responsibility, of course, through the popularization of education in which women were being daily drawn in larger numbers, the influx of ideas from outside countries and nations, more contact with foreigners and also the gradual recollection of the resplendent days their women ancestors and their country had known, all these served to inspire women into organizing themselves. *Sharda Sadan* and the *Seva Sadan* were founded to educate adult women and to alleviate the miserable conditions of the poor widows. In 1918 the Indian National Congress as well

24. Lohia, n.5, p. 67.



as the Muslim League accepted the principle of adult suffrage to women without any restriction. In 1920 two princely States of Cochin and Travancore, granted franchise to women representatives to their respective Legislative Councils. Soon after the promulgation of the Montague-Chelmsford constitution of 1919 Madras also gave the right of vote to women.

In 1926 an appeal was issued to the women of all provinces to assemble together and deliberate upon the significant matters. In the same year there were held 23 women's conferences all over the country. During 1927 there were such 30 educational conferences held all over India. In the same year was founded the All-India Women's Conference. In the session the apathy and indifference towards women in India was ridiculed and deplored. In her presidential address the Maharani of Baroda gave a stirring call to action. She believed that a few decades saw the curse of "suttee" removed from her country. With a like determination the other social evils could also be overcome.<sup>25</sup> In a resolution passed on the third day of the Conference the effect of early marriage was deplored, and urged the Government to pass the legislation to make marriage below the age of 16 a penal offence. In the resolution was also demanded that the age of consent be raised to sixteen.<sup>26</sup>

An equally lively interest was taken by Gandhiji in the amelioration of the social conditions of women. In his view the salvation of the nation relied on the enlightenment of its women-folk. He keenly desired the women to gain freedom and scope to develop their inner faculties. He was greatly perturbed when he saw the ignorant small girls being married and child-widows leading a miserable existence. All this appeared to weaken the physical and moral resources of the nation. It was an insult to women's dignity. "I passionately desire", he wrote, "the utmost freedom for our women. I detest the child marri-

25. *Indian Quarterly Register*, n. 21, p. 426.

26. *Ibid*, p. 427.

ages. I shudder to see a child-widow and shiver with rage when a husband just widowed contracts with brutal indifference another marriage." He deplored the "criminal" indifference of parents who kept their daughters utterly ignorant and illiterate and brought them up only for the purpose of marrying them off to some young man of means. In his view women must have votes and an equal legal status.<sup>27</sup> In his view the existing status of the women was another sore in India and it was as bad as untouchability. He called upon them to demand and inspire respect, dignity by ceasing to think of themselves as the objects of male desire only. Let them forget their inferiority and enter into public life, take the risks and assist in the allround process of national regeneration. Women should not only renounce personal comforts, but they should also participate actively in men's problems and privations. Instead of demanding mercy, they should compete with men in suffering for the national cause.

Gandhiji also took a keen interest in the removal of prostitution. He considered it nothing less than 'moral leprosy.'<sup>28</sup> According to his own estimation nearly one million fifty thousand women were engaged in this profession.<sup>29</sup> In Andhra and Barisal he met such women in conference. He suggested to them to substitute their living by lowest living and proposed spinning. On the display of eagerness by them to do the same Mahatma Gandhi called upon the men of India to respect women. He believed that gambling in vice had no place in their evolution. *Swaraj* meant that people must regard these inhabitants of India as their own sisters.<sup>30</sup> These women were not the weaker sex but the better half of humanity, the nobler of the two; for they were the embodiment of sacrifice, silent suffer-

27. *Young India*, 21 July 1921 (Ahmedabad) Vol. III, p. 229.

28. M. K. Gandhi, *Women*; a collection of his writings and speeches on the problem (Ahmedabad, 1958 ed.), p. 93.

29. *Ibid*, p. 95.

30. *Ibid*, p. 94.

ring, humility, faith and knowledge. Women's intuition had often proved truer than men's arrogant assumption of knowledge. The Mahatma also displayed his inability to understand the anxiety about female purity. He stated :

Why is there all this morbid anxiety about female purity ? Have women any say in the matter of male purity ? We hear nothing of women's anxiety about men's chastity. Why should men arrogate to themselves the right to regulate female purity ? It can not be superimposed from without. It is a matter of evolution from within and therefore of individual self-effort.<sup>31</sup>

The Mahatma also spoke against the maintenance of the *purdah* system on the basis of sex equalities. The educated women themselves advocated the abolition of *purdah*. They pleaded that open air and sunlight might not be denied to plants and animals if healthy growth was to be secured and yet under strict *purdah* conditions they were denied to women, young and old, all through their lives. From the time they attained puberty, number of young girls, Hindu and Muslim, often just like children in instinct and feeling, retired into seclusion.

The growth of socio-political consciousness among the women got further impetus when Mahatma Gandhi organized the mass struggles for freedom. Women participated in large numbers along with their menfolk in such struggles. They participated in prohibition by picketing the liquor and foreign cloth shops, led processions and agitations, served in the volunteer corps and courted imprisonment. In the real sense they got rid of their secluded life in homes, discarded *purdah* and closely associated with the task of national regeneration. They appeared to have attained self-confidence and self reliance. It was due to the tremendous tempo and excitement produced by the nation-

31. *Young India*, 25 November, 1926 (Ahmedabad) Vol. VIII, p.415,

nal movement all over the country. "If India wishes to assert", wrote Mrs. Hansa Mehta, "herself as of old, she must rouse herself from this hypnotic trance....The national movement... has made us realise our political serfdom. We are in a very patriotic mood....Bande Mataram...has become our National Anthem."<sup>32</sup>

Besides the movement conducted for ameliorating the social conditions of women in public field, constant endeavours were made to improve their lot by Indian members through legislation. In 1921 a Bill was introduced in the Legislative Assembly for granting certain rights to the women in the line of heredity. Due to the prolonged legislative process two years lapsed and in 1923 a completely revised Bill was introduced in the Council of State. But the Council was dissolved before there could be any discussion on the Bill and it lapsed. The issue could be revived only in 1925 when a new Bill was unanimously accepted in the Legislative Assembly. In 1928 it was introduced in the Council of State. The finally accepted Bill in 1929 gave to the son's daughter, sister and her son their due place in the order of succession. Apart from this, the Legislative Assembly and the Provincial Councils displayed keen interest in a Civil Marriage Bill and the raising of the age of marriage.

Meanwhile the Law Commissioners while drafting the Indian Penal Code declared the intercourse between husband and wife when the girl was under 10 years an offence of rape and the punishment could extend to transportation for life. In connection with the framing of a civil marriage Act and raising the consent age further Dr. Hari Singh Gour introduced a Civil Marriage Bill. But it was defeated on 2 February 1922. After certain modifications it was, however, enacted in October, 1925. It was applicable to Hindus only. On 2 February 1927

32. See also the views of Pt. Nehru, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru* (Orient Longman, 1972), Vol. 11, p. 243.

Har Bilas Sarda introduced a Bill for preventing child marriages. It was finally passed in October, 1929. According to this Act, the parties to a marriage were to be penalized where the girl was below 18 years of age. It was applicable to all communities. This law came into force in April 1930.

In other directions also there was made a continuous endeavour to liberalize the rigidity of Hindu law. Dr. Gour succeeded in getting the Bills regarding simple civil marriage, dissolution of Hindu law marriages and for divorce passed in May 1928. D.R. Jayakar succeeded in getting passed the Hindu Gains of Learning Bill and introduced a number of other Bills relating to civil marriage, etc.

#### Miss Mayo's 'Mother India'

Just on the eve of the announcement of the Simon Commission Miss Katherine Mayo got her book *Mother India* published in England. Practically every newspaper, periodical, journal and magazine in India severely criticized the book. It was alleged that its preparation was subsidized with a biased motive of degrading the social structure of India in the coterie of world public opinion and to prejudice her cause for *swaraj* and national independence. Referring to the public indignation Edward Thompson, a British historian, observed :

During the autumn of 1927 and the first half of 1928, the Psalmist, had he been in India, would not have needed to put his famous question as to why the heathen were raging. The fury was, and is, almost beyond acceptance as true.... There was the title, *Mother India*. India is sensitive on this point.<sup>33</sup>

The most slashing denunciation of the book appeared from Mahatma Gandhi in the columns of *Young India*. He commented that though the carefully chosen quotations gave it

33. Edward Thompson, *The Reconstruction of India* (London, 1931), p. 155.

the look of undetached, unbiased book but the impression created on his mind was that it was the report of a drain inspector sent out with the sole purpose of opening and examining the drains of the country to be reported upon, or to give a graphic description of the stench exuded from the opened drains. She said in effect with a certain amount of pride, "The drains are India." The book was no doubt untruthful, be the facts stated ever so truthful. Gandhiji continued :

If I open out and describe with punctilious care the stench exuded from the drains of London and say 'Behold London' my facts will be incapable of challenge, but my judgement will be rightly condemned as a travesty of truth. Miss Mayo's book is nothing better, nothing else.<sup>34</sup>

Continuing further Mahatma Gandhi challenged the claim of Miss Mayo that she wrote her book with an uncommitted and unattached outlook and its preparation and publication was not subsidized by any interested opponent of India.<sup>35</sup> He charged that Miss Mayo was an "avowed Indophobe and Anglophil", refusing to see anything good about Indians and anything bad about the British and their rule. She failed to provide one an elevated idea of western standard of judgement. She represented a class of sensational writers in the West. There were still thousands in the West who delighted in "shilling Shockers." Gandhiji also alleged that the authoress betrayed on every page the preconceived notions and prejudices.<sup>36</sup>

To refute the allegations of Miss Mayo Lala Lajpat Rai also wrote *Unhappy India* in 1928. The contents of the book have by now become a public property and hence need not be repeated. In reply to Miss Mayo's own article about her book, appearing in the January 1928 issue of the *Literary Magazine*

34. *Young India*, 15 September 1927 (Ahmadabad) Vol. IX, pp. 308-10.

35. For further study on this point see Edward Thompson, n. 33, p. 158.

36. *Young India*, n. 34, pp. 308-10.

from New York city, the *Modern Review*, in its issue of July 1928 published a poem by Alide Hill Booth-Smithson, an American poetess. For the perusal of the reader a few lines are quoted below :

Oh India : Country of divine discontent,  
Grieve thou not, at the cruel comment of our  
country maid ?

Having eyes she seeth not at all,  
Having ears she heareth not the call of thy soul.  
She's swayed by things external,  
As all of us are....

She hitched not her vehicle to a star.  
She loveth "brass tacks" (statistics)  
She heweth down here and scattereth there,  
She forgeteth her ancestors bowed in prayer  
For the truth which she lacks.  
Forgive her India—forgive us all  
For our spiritual blindness.<sup>37</sup>

37. "A reply to Miss Mayo", *Modern Review* (Calcutta 1928), Vol XLIV, p. 75.

## CHAPTER IV

### HINDU-MUSLIM PROBLEM

*There is absolutely no salvation for us, no Swaraj and no peace, no emancipation and no prosperity... no Swadeshi unless we can solve the Hindu-Muslim problem ....For the sake of the Motherland which lies prostrate at your feet, have your mercy on it, give up all ideas of anger and try to realise that every wound inflicted on a single Hindu or a single Mohammedan within the length and breadth of the land is a wound inflicted on the breast of your mother.*

*[Speech by Lala Lajpat Rai at the Belgaum Congress, Report of the Thirty-Ninth Session held in 1924, pp. 86&91].*

#### Days of Rowlatt Act

The years following the World War I were remarkable for the growth of nationalism in India. There was established a "marvellous concordant"<sup>1</sup> between Hindus and Muslims perhaps on an unprecedented scale for the first time after 1857. A number of factors played a historical role in contributing in this sphere. Muslim protest, not verbally but also in action, against the dissolution of Khilafat and the active support of the Hindus to their Muslim compatriots, led to the growth of a feeling of idealism and aspiration. But equally significant was the common resentment and active protest against the promulgation of the Rowlatt Act. *Satya-*

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1. Beni Prasad, *The Hindu - Muslim Questions* (Allahabad, 1941), p. 47.



*graha* pledges were jointly taken both by Hindus and Muslims in large numbers. At Delhi was established a *Satyagraha Sabha* with Dr. Abdur Rahman and Pandit Indra Vidyavachaspati as secretaries. Mahatma Ghandhi was invited off and on to speak to its members. The *Sabha* also organized public meetings where the Arya Samajists and Maulvis—both uncompromising champions of their respective religions—were seen sitting side by side and supporting each other in their strong criticism against the British bureaucracy.<sup>2</sup>

On 30 March 1919 a procession of both the Hindus and Muslims was organized. The police opened fire and many a people—both Hindus and Muslims—were killed. The dead body of a Muslim was obtained from the police custody by the Hindus and safely placed in a nearby mosque. The *janaza* (tabut bier) of the dead Muslim was taken to the burial ground accompanied by not less than 35,000 people of both the religions.<sup>3</sup> Next day on 31 March 1919 the dead bodies of some of those killed were again recovered from the police custody. Out of the dead bodies two biers went to the graveyard followed by 15,000 people among whom Hindus predominated and three went to the Hindu Cremation Ghat followed by some 30,000 people among whom there was predominance of the Muslims.<sup>4</sup> Swami Shraddhanand, a contemporary observer of the whole ideal scene, writes in his memoirs:

The sight was wonderful ! The Muslim biers went mainly carried on Hindu shoulders, and the Hindu biers were supported by Muslim shoulders. And the beauty of it was that none of the bier carriers afterwards repented or apologised for having given shoulder (*Kandha diya*) to a Kafir's

2. Swami Shraddhanand, *Inside Congress* (Bombay, 1946), p. 52.

3. *Ibid*, p. 61.

4. *Ibid*, p. 62; see also p. 91.

Arthi or to a Mlecha's Janaza. As the Janaza was stopped in the morning for prayers for dead and some Mullahas asked me and other Hindus to turn our faces away from them, the Iman with us came running and stopped them saying: "Swamiji! we are all God's people. We want you to join our prayers"; and I did join them with all my heart.<sup>5</sup>

After setting fire to the funeral pyres of the killed Hindus at the cremation ground Swami Shraddhanand addressed the assembled crowd and appealed to both the major communities to keep up their unity. Here a Sikh present on the scene interrupted the speaker, "Do not leave us severely alone. We Sikhs also are with the nation."<sup>6</sup> Hundreds of persons in that vast concourse were "shedding tears of love and sympathy."<sup>7</sup> To commemorate the memory of the dead many people observed fast.

To express their indignation against the shooting the people also boycotted the law courts and established arbitration committees to settle their mutual disputes. Two intricate civil cases lying in pending for the last five years were referred by Hakim Ajmal Khan, to the sole arbitration of Swami Shraddhanand. In one case Hindus were arrayed against Muslims. The enquiry was conducted. Both the parties told the truth to the arbitrator and signed a compromise deed dictated by Swami Shraddhanand. The decree was executed at once without waiting the decision of the British law courts. Another case was connected with a disturbance in Kangri Bazar. The offending party, although belonging to the upper caste Hindus, apologized and paid something to the Satyagraha fund. In this way more than two dozen<sup>8</sup> cases which would have dragged on in the British courts for years, were decided

5. *Ibid.*, p. 61.

6. *Report of the proceedings of the 34th session of the Indian National Congress held at Amritsar in December 1919* (Amritsar, 1922), p. 7.

7. *Ibid.*

8. Swami Shraddhanand, n. 2, p. 66.

amicably and peacefully. From these socio-religious developments it appeared that "Ram Raj was set in."<sup>9</sup> The Hindu-Muslim fraternization appeared to be something ideal. Old prejudices were forgotten. All doubts appeared to have withered away. A typical case cited by Swami Shraddhanand illustrates categorically that a Hindu trader was walking with five-rupee currency notes in his pocket. One such note was invitingly exposed. A fourteen-year old Muslim boy in passing, put his fingers on it and stole it away. The policeman on duty who was watching, arrested him and took running to the Hindu, "Sir, the rascal took this note from your pocket." The trader looked at the boy with compassion and bringing out his bundle of notes, deliberately counted them and told that his entire money was safe. He insisted on the boy being released. After going at a distance when the trader turned to another lane, the poor boy placed the note in his hands, fell at his feet, and lamented that his old mother and a little sister had nothing to eat since two days and he was jobless on account of the public strike. All this led him into temptation. The Hindu trader, who perhaps never suffered from a twinge of conscience before, was overpowered, "My son! this note belongs to you. Come with me and I will give you some present for your mother." The boy was taken to Hindu's house and got some consumption goods with which he brought consolation to his troubled family.<sup>10</sup>

On 31 March the police and the military tried to disperse the huge crowds in the streets and shot at them, killing some people. Swami Shraddhanand, tall and stately in his *sanyasin's* dress, faced the bayonets of the Gurkhas in the Chandni Chowk. He survived them and India was thrilled by the incident.

Being the first Friday after the police firing, the fourth of April was a significant day in Delhi. The congregational

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9. *Ibid*, p. 65.

10. *Ibid*, pp, 66,7.

prayers were to be held in the Jama Masjid. An invitation had been despatched by responsible Muslim leaders inviting the public to join the memorial meeting called for invoking God's blessings on the Hindus and Muslims killed in the police firing. The Muslims insisted on the Hindus going inside the Mosque and joining the memorial meeting. A batch of nearly 50 Muslims approached Swami Shraddhanand to accompany it for the same purpose, and he readily agreed. Referring to the Muslim enthusiasm Swamiji states :

.. In the way they requisitioned several conveyances one faster than the other till an empty motor car was found. It was then hurried on and reached...the Jama Masjid. I saw some people about to come down but when they saw me ascending the steps, shouts of "Mahatma Gandhi ki Jay" and "Hindu Musalman ki Jay" went forth and all of them turned back. The gathering inside could not be less than thirty thousand. I was going to sit behind the last men when other Musalman brethren came running and took me inside the building.<sup>11</sup>

On his arrival Swamiji found Maulvi Abdul Majeed addressing the assembled people. Immediately he stopped waiting for Swamiji to go up. Swamiji himself described the further developments when he stated :

I hesitated. A hundred voices urged me to go up. After ascending two steps I again hesitated. The huge audience was up on its legs and with one voice called upon me to go up. When I reached the pulpit, they sat down. I expected Maulvi Abdul Majeed to go on with his sermon. But he stopped with the remark : "You have heard what the Quran says about the blood of the Martyrs. Swami Shraddhanand will now tell you that the Holi Ved, which is

11. *Ibid*, p. 68.

believed to be the revelation according to our Hindu brethren, inculcates the same teachings."<sup>12</sup>

Addressing the large assembly Swamiji called upon to bear testimony to the innocence of the killed and ended with exhorting the people to be united to overthrow British Imperialism. When he thrice repeated, "Om Shanti, Ameen", the entire audience followed him with the reverberating voice.<sup>13</sup> It was an inspiring and impressive spectacle. It set an illustration for the people all over the country. The Hindu *sadhus* and *sanyasis* addressed from Muslim pulpits and Muslim divines and preachers addressed mixed audiences in Hindu temples, in all parts of the country.<sup>14</sup> Speedily though only temporarily, all distinctions of mosques and temples vanished.

### In Punjab

This spirit of cordiality and mutual co-operation also permeated through the Punjab. In Amritsar Dr. Kitchlew and Dr. Satya Pal were actively organising largely attended public meetings against the promulgation of the Rowlatt Acts. Both of them were exiled from the city in consequence of their activities. Excited crowds demonstrated in front of the city *Kotwali* demanding the release of the two leaders and calling for communal unity.

In Lahore both Hindus and Muslims numbering 25,000 organized a procession in Badshahi Square with banners proclaiming, "The King who practises tyranny cuts his roots underneath". The people also publicly destroyed pictures of the British ruling family, shouting that King George was dead and declaring that the Amir of Afghanistan and the Emperor of Germany were their Kings. In bitter anger they spat at the Bri-

12. *Ibid.* p. 69.

13. *Ibid.* p. 70.

14. For further study see *ibid.* pp. 17-9.

tish soldiers and called them "white pigs".<sup>15</sup> Later on the day of Martial Law both the Hindus and Muslims were handcuffed in pairs to face the consequences of showing religious unity. For those nationalist elements which had believed that the Indian liberties could not be maintained safe and secure except by a close understanding between the two communities, it was a touching and inspiring illustration.

On 6 April, 1919 in the Jallianwalla Bagh tragedy the unity of the Hindus and Muslims was expressed in the real and genuine manner. Struggling against the very odd circumstances both of them were killed together for a common cause. In his evidence before the Congress Commissioners one Maqbul Mohammed of Amritsar city had related two touching incidents which are worth quoting here. Speaking sadly of the pathetic scenes he saw after the firing on the carriage bridge at Amritsar, on 10 April 1919 he stated that he heard a dying man gasping "Hindu Mussalman ki Jai". A boy of 16 or 17 years of age lay wounded with his entrails protruding, having been hit on the belly. When Dr. Dhanpat Rai Salaria and he approached him, he whispered, "I am dying, attend to my brethren", "Hindu Musalman ki Jai". Many similar instances of notable sacrifice he saw when he was pouring water into the mouths of the dying.<sup>16</sup> In his presidential address at the 1920 Congress Lala Lajpat Rai remembered the dying Muslim urchin who also invoked the "Hindu Musalman ki Jai" with his last breath.<sup>17</sup> Similarly Maulana Mohamed Ali witnessed out of the firing, emerging a new strong nation of Hindus and Muslims that would henceforth fear nobody.<sup>18</sup> On 9 April the

15. *Disorders Inquiry Committee Report 1919-20* (Calcutta, Government of India, p. 1920) p. xxv.

16. *Congress Sub-Committee Inquiry into Punjab Affairs—Evidence* (1920), pp. 31-2.

17. Lajpat Rai, *The Call To Young India* (Madras, 1920), p. 307.

18. *Report of the Thirty-Fourth Session of the Indian National Congress*, p. 78.

Hindu festival of *Ram Navami* was celebrated by Hindus and Muslims alike. It was an unparalleled and unseen illustration of religious fraternization. Water was provided by Muslims and drunk by Hindus from their hands. The co-operation of two sides was further exemplified by a cricket match between the Muslim Club and the Hindu Sabha. In his reception speech at the Amritsar Congress Swami Shraddhanand paid tribute to those Hindus and Muslims who worked unitedly inspired with the resolve of serving their country. He referred to their unity endeavours and common sufferings on the day of *Ram Navami* as a veritable confluence of the Ganges and Jamuna and thus turning the city of Amritsar already sanctified by the Sikh Gurus, into a "real reservoir of nectar."<sup>19</sup> Speaking in the same emotional touching vein of thought at a little distance of time on 15 November 1920 in the Hindu College, Benares, Maulana Mohamed Ali said : "These two communities (Hindus and Muslims) will be like the Ganges and Jamuna which come both flowing down and would co-mingle in the waves of *Tribeni*". No sooner the speaker had finished the sentence, he was cheered with loud sky-rending voice of "hear hear".<sup>20</sup>

In this day by day developing unity both Hindus and Muslims began to consider the interest of the country paramount. No longer they appeared to think over whether they were Hindus or Muslims respectively first. The question of precedence appeared to have no significance. Both of them appeared to have inculcated a spirit of sacrifice and devotion for the national not communal problems. Unity alone appeared the most indispensable condition for the successful ending of the sorrows and sufferings of the long downtrodden country. No longer they appeared an unwilling congregation of racially distinctive and heterogenous elements. Almost every thinking Indian was thoroughly distrustful of *Fireenghis*

19. *Ibid*, p. 1.

20. Home (Pol.) Department, Government of India, File No. 11/192, p. 3.

desirous of getting rid of them. Never before was there so much and such widespread hostility to foreign rule and want of faith in the *bonafides* of *Fireenghis*.

### **Khilafat Question**

On this question too the two major communities of the country united. In the letter of invitation to hold the first conference of the Khilafat on 23 November 1919 the organizers like Asaf Ali called upon the people to find out some amicable solution of the cow-protection question. In his presidential address Mahatma Gandhi expressed the full support of his co-religionists. In his view the test of friendship was unconditional support in adverse circumstances. Co-operation that needed consideration was a commercial contract or like an adulterated cement which did not bind. If the Muslims felt themselves bound in respect to spare the Hindus' feelings and stop cow-killing they might do so, no matter whether the Hindus co-operated with them or not. In his view the unconditional co-operation meant the protection of the cow.<sup>21</sup> The Muslim leaders attending the Conference reciprocated in the same manner. In his vote of thanks to Mahatma Gandhi, Maulana Abdul Bari appealed to his co-religionists to stop the cow-killing. In his view the Muslim honour would be at stake if they forgot the co-operation of the Hindus.<sup>22</sup> Similar views of mutual co-operation were expressed at the annual sessions of the Congress and the Muslim League.<sup>23</sup> In his letter to the Viceroy, dated 29 April, 1918 Mahatma Gandhi expressed his inability to remain indifferent to the Muslims' cause. "Their sorrows must be our sorrows", he wrote.<sup>24</sup>

21. *Young India* (1919-22); a collection of writings by Gandhiji and others (Madras, 1922), pp. 137-38 & 141.

22. *Ibid*, p. 142.

23. For further study see the extracts from the text of the presidential address delivered by Hakim Ajmal Khan at the 1919 session of the All-India Muslim League, *Indian Review* (Madras, 1920) Vol. XXI, p. 44.

24. *Report of the proceedings of the 1918 session of the Congress*, p. 13.



### Common Struggle

The Hindu-Muslim Unity found its best expression in the first Satyagraha Movement of 1920-22 complemented by the Khilafat agitation. On all sides there appeared to be tremendous probabilities of being actuated by the spirit of common nationalism. The following dialogue exchanged between Maulana Shaukat Ali and a joint gathering of Hindus and Muslims at Etah (U.P.) on 13 May 1921 is quite revealing:

“I ask the Hindus as well as the Muhammedans to contract an everlasting friendship with one another. Your intention must be to live as brothers in spite of the obstacles that may come in your way.”

“Yes”.

“Will you continue your friendship though Muhemmedans may oppress the Hindus and slaughter the cows or the Muhammedans are maltreated by the Hindus and their mosques are defiled?”

“Yes, without fail.”

“Then you are sure to succeed in your attempt.”

“Hindu-Musalman ki Jai”.<sup>25</sup>

In a speech delivered at Bulandshahr in the same year Maulana Mohamed Ali said:

What gives me most pleasure is to hear *Hindu-Musalman ki Jai*. I can say with authority that the day when these two people have become united, it would become impossible for any power on earth to withstand this manifestation of the unity.<sup>26</sup>

25. Home (Pol.) Department, Government of India, File No, 11/1921, p. 24.

26. *Ibid*, p, 3,

This phase of national liberation movement was ever memorable. The various political personalities came very near to each other not for the matter of negotiating or bargaining the unity of a temporary understanding but to bring to an end alien-rule. A reply to the British policy of *divide and rule* was found in the speech of Lala Lajpat Rai when he said that it was only a year before that he had protested against the launching of Non-Co-operation movement while at the moment he himself among others was non-co-operating with the Government. Amidst loud applause he added : "I would prefer a Muslim rule to the English Government."<sup>27</sup> An equally unselfish-looking response came from Maulana Shaukat Ali :

I would say on behalf of the Muslims. We have had a time when we were the rulers of this country, and if the *will* of God does not vouchsafe Swaraj to both the Hindus and Muslims we would be content even if the Hindus alone get the government of the country.<sup>28</sup>

Still another striking feature of this unity was that various religious organizations appointed the persons of other religious community to become prominent participants in the deliberations of their annual sessions and conferences. While in 1921 session of the Hindu Mahasabha, Hakim Ajmal Khan was elected Chairman of the Reception Committee, the 1922 session of the Khilafat Conference elected Pandit Deep Narayan Singh to do the same job.<sup>29</sup> Furthermore, to keep all the communities united in the struggle the leaders of the various groups suggested the formation of national pacts safeguarding the rights and privileges of the minorities, joint committees to examine the causes leading to friction, and arbitration boards providing for a settlement of the questions leading to differen-

27, *Ibid*, p. 24.

28. *Ibid*.

29. For detailed study see *Indian Review* (Madras, 1923) Vol. XXIV, pp. 25-7; Swami Shradhdhanand, n. 2, p. 143.

ces and conflicts.<sup>30</sup> In this environment of collaboration the problems like the cow-killing, the singing of music in front of a mosque, and the inner agony or hatred felt by the members of either religious group, withered away. A secular pattern of human behaviour was growing. Members of both the communities vied with one another in demonstrations of fraternization. Orthodox Hindus invited Muslim leaders to dine in their homes. Muslim women in veils attended meetings and invited prominent Hindu leaders like Gandhiji to address them. An unbelievable spectacle was that of the Muslim leaders going to these normally prohibited meetings with bandages on their eyes. Gandhiji was believed to be pure enough to go to such meetings. Muslim women did not hesitate to have him in their midst. In one of his public speeches Maulana Shaukat Ali went to the extent of saying : "The love that exists between us (Mahatma and Ali Brothers) is like that which exists amongst the sons of the same mother."<sup>31</sup> The close co-operation of Ali Brothers and Gandhiji had served to make Hindu-Muslim unity "more than a phrase", admitted P. C. Bamford, Deputy Director of Intelligence Bureau.<sup>32</sup>

The political awakening appeared to have reached its high watermark with the repetition of Maulana Mohamed Ali's famous Karachi speech (alleged to be provoking Muslim soldiers in Indian army to revolt) in thousands of public meetings all over the country attended both by Hindus and Muslims on 16 October 1921. In course of national movement thousands of people from both the communities went to jail to suffer all the hardships cheerfully. These participants in the struggle appeared to justify the the following verse of a poet :

Shall I ask the brave soldier  
who fights by my side

30 For detailed study see *Indian Review* (Madras, 1923), Vol. XXIV, p. 24; also see *Ibid* (1922), Vol. XXIII, pp. 25-7.

31. Home (Pol.) Dept., Government of India, File No. 11/1921, p. 29.

32. P. C. Bamford, *Histories of Non-Co-operation and Khilafat Movement* (Delhi, Govt. of India Press, 1925), p. 75.

In the cause of my country  
if our creeds agree ?

The consciousness of sacrifice made in the past led them willingly to make further ones in the future. As oppressed all of them were in one way or another, they felt stirred to despise their comfort until the affront of not being a nation had been taken away from them. Nationalism arose to give a positive quality to the unprecedented ambition of getting liberation from the foreigners. Insult and injustice suffered by both of them in the past united them together for national prestige. In a speech delivered during the intensive phase of struggle Maulana Shaukat Ali said: "The Punjab, which was the most loyal, got the Jallianwala Bagh, the Sikh nation got its reward in Canada. Sardar Gurdit Singh also got his reward at Budge Budge. The world has now been disillusioned."<sup>33</sup>

In another speech delivered at the Divisional Conference held at Budaun he said :

As long as the Punjab wrongs are not redressed, the *Khilafat* question is not settled and full *Swaraj* is not given, it will be unlawful for us to have rest or to allow the Government to have rest. Brethren, it is our aim that either the Government or we should remain in India. (Of course, of course.) Do all of you aim at the same thing ? (Yes, we all do).<sup>34</sup>

In still another speech delivered at Ghazipur on 21 May 1921, he proclaimed :

It would be impossible for Government to remain in India if it does not take our side when we are on the right. We do not belong to the category of thieves, wicked

33. Home (Pol.) Department, Government of India, File No. 11/1921, p. 65.

34. *Ibid*, p. 29,

men or robbers. We are fighting for the cause of the country. It concerns you as well as us.<sup>35</sup>

There was hardly any attempt which was not made to expose the fear-complex created by the British rulers. For instance, in his presidential address delivered at the Gujarat Provincial Khilafat Conference held at Broach on 1 June 1921, Maulana Mohamad Ali elaborated the thesis :

....They (Indians) were never struck with fear at the sight of a Moghul or a Pathan. The condition of your India is otherwise. If a person of white colour happens to pass through your lanes or streets, all exclaim (with fear), "Here comes the Sahib! There goes the ma'am." This state (of humiliation) which is the result of British administration never existed before. The British gods are worshipped in such a way as they were never worshipped before. This is the result of your present education. The purpose of your education was to fill your minds with fear.<sup>36</sup>

But in another speech delivered at Lucknow he exhorted the people to get rid of this fear-complex :

We do not care for the orders of the officers. We should hate to be in their (Englishmen's) bondage. It will not be warrant of death when you will say that you are tired of their slavery. You like to go to jail [rather than] to be their slaves. You prefer to be hanged [rather than] to become slaves.<sup>37</sup>

### **Struggle Postponed**

At this stage of Non-Co-operation Movement the situation all over the country as a whole was remarkably favourable for

35. *Ibid*, p. 46.

36. *Ibid*, p. 6.

37. *Ibid*, p. 7.

There is no dearth of similar speeches delivered by the other leaders of the Congress like Mahatma Gandhi. Most of them are in public knowledge by now.

the success of *satyagraha*. But suddenly the situation took a turn. The abrupt strangling of the national movement, due to an isolated incident at Chauri Chaura, proved detrimental to the advancement of nationalism. The long accumulated politico-economic discontent of the people, which was on its way to find an expression in a struggle for supremacy, was suddenly forced not to express itself. It was, however, against the law of human nature to check this expression especially when by raising the emotions the discontent was either on the brink of its outburst or if it had started expressing itself that also half-way. Instead of finding an expression against the common adversary of the Indian people fully to its own satisfaction, which perhaps would have served the interests of the nationalist forces far better, it was forced to express in a communal struggle between the two major communities. And people had begun to non-co-operate with each other rather than with the government.

With the change of environment once again the old prejudices, grievances and bickerings of communal politics began to appear in public life. These internal dissensions led the communal groups on either side to degenerate into the filthiest propaganda tactics. A large number of vernacular papers were started simply to indulge into the most uncontrolled licence in ridiculing the religion and custom of the opposite community, and they sold like hot cakes. The masses of the country had their worst passions procured for, as it provided a profitable employment to the vulgar and rowdy scribes. All these development brought to the surface the inner working of the minds of considerable sections of the population. Many a Congressman was a "communalist under his national cloak."<sup>38</sup> Strangely enough, quite a number of Congressmen were actually the members of Hindu Mahasabha and Muslim League, and such activities were not considered unconstitutional and anti-national. Divided into a number of groups the leaders of public life were thus unable to secure unanimity for a common prog-

38. Jawaharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography* (London, 1945 ed.), p. 136.

ramme. All this reminded one of what a writer once said about the Spanish character. In his view if seven Spaniards were to form an association, it would soon split into three with one independent.<sup>39</sup> All these developments changed the whole course of progress of Indian polity. The greatest setback to the progress came from within the country itself.

To some extent it is true that the communal antagonism continued to persist in the public life even in the days of the Khilafat and the Non-Co-operation Movement itself. Mahatma Gandhi himself recognized this prevailing inconsistency of national life in an article written in *Young India* on 11 May 1921, "Many Hindus distrust Musalmans honestly. They believe that *Swaraj* means Musalman raj, for they argue that without the British Musalmans of India will aid Musalman Powers to build up a Musalman Empire in India. Musalmans, on the other hand, fear that the Hindus being in an overwhelming majority will smother them."<sup>40</sup>

In the beginning of 1922 the *Ittifaq* paper of Delhi also produced an article providing some glimpse of dissensions among the leaders of the Congress at the Ahmedabad Session. On 15 March 1922 the *Pioneer* newspaper produced a translation of the same article with the title "Moslems and Mr. Gandhi : Maulana Hasrat Mohani's grievances". According to the author of this article Maulana Hasrat Mohani asked Mahatma Gandhi how it was that while the "Musalmans were willingly bearing the brunt of Government's wrath and were continually going to jail, "Whenever the question of any right arises, you say that the Hindu population of India is 28 crores and Muhammadans only 7 crores and so they are entitled to all privileges in proportion of 28 to 7; but for being shoe-beaten, assaulted and killed and for going to jail the Musalmans propor-

39. See *Indian Review* (Madras, 1915), Vol. XXVI, p. 97.

40. Mahatma Gandhi, *To the Hindus and Muslims* (Karachi, 1942), p. 54.

tion is 95, the Hindus only 5 in every hundred." Continuing this argument the Maulana produced a long list of those who had gone to jail, and showed that, while the figures of Muhammadans who had gone to jail was 95 in every hundred, that of the Hindus was only 2 per cent. Along with this he produced another list of resignations from Government service which was a much more dismal document, showing that  $99\frac{1}{2}$  per cent of those resignations were by Muhammadans only. Yet another list showed a similar disparity so far as the question of the relinquishment of titles and practice at the bar was concerned. The list of non-co-operators apologizing before courts of the law showed a similar state of affairs. He unfolded the names, the status, and position of persons and who had relinquished Government appointments, and according to the reporter told a 'sorrowful tale' that every vacancy thus caused was filled up by a Hindu. The Maulana also alleged that the Hindus gave 18 lakhs of rupees to Government for the extermination of the Moplahs. At this point Gandhiji was reported to have interrupted the Maulana and asked him to state what the Moplahs had done to the Hindus. In reply the Maulana retorted that the Moplahs learnt that the Hindus were giving every sort of help to Government so they taught them a lesson. At first the Moplahs regarded the Hindus as their friends, but when it gradually dawned upon them that the Hindus were their enemies in disguise they thought it to be their bounden duty to teach them a lesson. At this stage Hakim Ajmal Khan Sahab said that the occasion was not one for a recital of this kind, as it might injure the cause of unity between the Hindus and the Muhammadans. Maulana Hasrat retorted, saying that he had come to know that the Hakim Sahab was like Mahatma Gandhi, a friend of the Government in disguise; that Khan Bahadur Peerzada Muhammad Hosain, judge, and Hakim Sayeed Khan were his agents and were bringing messages from the Chief Commissioner of Delhi to him, and that he was carrying propaganda work on behalf of the Government in conjunction with the Hindus. Exaggerating the facts the Maulana also



said that he could not bear the sight of his co-religionists being killed and ruined. The properties of Mohammedans had all been taken away in lieu of interest, reputations had been ruined, lakhs of persons had been killed. The Maulana asked them how it was that Hakim Ajmal Khan and Mahatma Gandhi had not so far been arrested, and what was it that stood in the way of their arrest ? He told them to remember that he would secure pardon for all the Musalmans and get them released. "You", he said, "want *Swaraj*, but our object is the Khilafat. If Kemal Pasha's sword is powerful he will put right Khilafat wrongs, and we will give him whatever support we can. Your *Swaraj* can not give us any advantage; on the other hand, it will be enormous harm to our cause. We realise that it is possible for us to make peace with snakes and scorpions but not with you." The Maulana asked the Muhammadans to leave the *pandal*, and at his call, according to the reporter, 75 per cent of the audience left the place with shouts of "Allaho Akbar", leaving only 25 per cent behind in the Congress *pandal*. The Maulana then held his meeting at a different place.<sup>41</sup>

The suspension of the Non-Co-operation Movement further complicated the situation. The Muslims were disappointed. They were feeling that their own grievances, including the Khilafat question, had been pushed into the background, and that they had been utilized merely to further the Hindu aim of *Swaraj* for India. In the Punjab, at that time, there was prevalent a common joke that *Swaraj* meant *swah* (ashes) for the Muslims and *Raj* for the Hindus. This kind of feeling among Muslims was shared by their leaders who, however, realised the necessity of concealing it in order to maintain at least a semblance of much-desired communal unity.<sup>42</sup>

In a speech delivered at the Home Rule League office, Allahabad, in those days Maulana Mohamed Ali also referred

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41. Home (Pol.) Dept., Government of India, File No. 489/1922, p. 38.

42. P. C. Bamford, n. 32, p. 191.

to the problem : "I think that this squabbling of ours (between Hindus and Muhammadans) is like one between two snakes which began to swallow each other from the sides of each other's tail with the result that their mouths clashed with each other."<sup>43</sup>

Besides, among Muslims there was an orthodox section which alienated the Hindus by showing their faith in extra-territorial loyalty. When World War I was at its climax, a *Jehad* leaflet was distributed by one *Amir of Hindustani Fanatics*. It was addressed to the Muslim warriors who were under the yoke of the British, French and Russians. It attempted to prove that Mohammadans who had fought for the Allies were infidels, while those who fought for the Axis Powers were "doing *Jehad* in the way of God". The leaflet went on to urge the former to revolt, to assassinate their oppressors and to declare their independence under the leadership of Ottoman Empire. It purported to be signed by eight members of the *Muslim Ulema Association*, each of whom represented a separate country.<sup>44</sup>

On the other hand, the elements of extra-territorial loyalty and the Pan-Islamists condemned those sections of Muslims who had come closer to secularism and nationalism. The Muslim League was despised by them to have become little more than an adjunct to the Congress. Their criticism chiefly took the shape of declarations that the League was inactive, and practically moribund, and that it had abandoned its policy to the tender mercies of the Hindu Congressmen. The bulk of this criticism, in which Hasrat Mohani took an active part, was directed against Wazir Hassan and Mazhar-ul-Haq.<sup>45</sup>

A meeting of the *Jamiat-ul-Ulema* was held in Bombay on the 26 July, 1922. It was resolved to ask the Central Khila-

43. Home (Pol.) Dept., Government of India, File No. 194/1921-22, pp 6-7.

44. P. C. Bamford, n. 32, p. 120.

45. *Ibid*, p. 129.

fat Committee not to side too strongly with the anti-cow-killers and not to go to the length of rescuing cows brought for sacrifice, as this would be interference with religion.<sup>46</sup>

#### Further indication of Hindu-Muslim Friction

Although the *Jamiat-ul-Ulema* confined itself to recommendations for leniency as to cow-killing, individual Muhammadan extremists were less restrained. In August Bashir Ahmad Khan, the president of the *Anjuman-i-Islamia* at Gurdaspur in an open letter to Ajmal Khan, definitely stated that the Hindus were the bitterest enemies of Turkey and accused them of having waited for centuries for the destruction of Islam in India. He went on to point out how they had managed to overthrow the ascendancy of Muslims in this country by occupying almost exclusively all posts in the public services, commerce, railways and municipal administration, and he voiced his belief that they had no regard for the terms of the Lucknow Pact. He added that the Khilafat agitation up to this state had merely had the effect of increasing robbery and dacoity and stated that in his opinion the idea of Muhammadans combining with Hindus in order to start civil disobedience against the existing Government was fatuous.<sup>47</sup>

At about the same time Mushir Hassan Kidwai, writing to Seth Chotani, said: "In the heads of our brothers no other thing except *charkha* comes. May the curse of God be on this *charkha* and the question of untouchables."<sup>48</sup> Writing to Dr. Ansari, he said, "If such coldness is shown towards the Khilafat I will shortly raise a standard of revolt against the Khilafat Committee and the Congress. Even if the Hindus do not stand by us we would not give up the Khilafate....If in future any Khilafat work is to be done a conference may be held or the services

46. *Ibid*, p. 206.

47. *Ibid*.

48. *Ibid*.

of the Muslim League or *Jamiat-ul-Ulema-i-Hind* may be utilised." For the attainment of *Swaraj*, National Education and political concessions he, however, wanted the Muslims to work with Hindus in the Congress.<sup>49</sup>

### **Role of British Regime**

The alien regime took full advantage of these dissensions particularly after the suspension of Non-Co-operation Movement. Rather it exploited the prevailing exigency fully to its advantage. In its own interest it could not afford to ~~lose~~ such a wonderful opportunity which it was trying to obtain since long—since the alienation of the Muslim *bourgeoisie*, intelligentsia and the masses after the annulment of the Bengal partition. In pursuance of its strategy of balancing different social forces against one another it made all possible use of political communalism. To weaken the bargaining power of Indian *bourgeoisie* and masses, which the Indian National Congress built up by organizing powerful movements like the boycott campaign, British Imperialism made a counter-manoeuvre. It lent support and succeeded in provoking those sectarian, communal, anti-nationalist and disruptive elements both among the Hindus and Muslims, which were pushed in the background during the growth of a strong national sentiment in 1919-22. The field was left squarely free for these elements to operate in the Indian public life also by the imprisonment of the prominent national leaders including Mahatma Gandhi, who were a great instrument in curbing the power of these elements and maintaining communal harmony.

Moreover, after the abrupt suspension of the Non-Co-operation Movement the youth was particularly very much disillusioned. Though some of them like Bhagat Singh, Chander Shekhar Azad and Ashfaqullah diverted their energies towards the organization of revolutionary mass movement on secular

and socialist lines, but a certain section among them, particularly of *bourgeois* and *petty-bourgeois* origin, thought it fit to waste their energies in communal tangle. For instance, the "Youth Party" of the Kohat Sanatan Dharma Sabha led by Jiwan Das, were primarily responsible for fomenting the trouble in Kohat. The response of the younger generation among Muslims was also in no way better.

These wranglings were not unwelcome to the alien rulers. The more it was made obvious, wrote Lord Birkenhead to Lord Reading, that these antagonism were profound and affected immense and irreconcilable sections of the Indians, the ~~more~~ conspicuously was the fact exemplified that British alone could play the role of the composer.<sup>50</sup> Some of the honest British officials admitted to Gandhiji to have taken advantage of communal dissensions.<sup>51</sup> A number of references of similar nature during riots<sup>52</sup> can safely be quoted. For instance, it was in the

50. Lord Birkenhead, *The Last Phase* (London, 1945) Vol. II, pp. 245-46. For the views of the Simon Commission see Jagdish Sharma, ed., *India's Struggle for Freedom*, a collection of documents (Delhi, 1962), pp. 231-32. For further study see also the statement by Lord Olivier, an ex-Secretary of State, inserted by Y. B. Mathur, *Muslims and Changing India* (New Delhi, Trimurti Publishers, 1972) p. 50.

51. See the letter written by Mahatma Gandhi to Dr. Norman Leya, M. P. on 23 July 1926. It is deposited in *Gandhi Smarak Nidhi*, New Delhi.

52. It may be recalled that there took place a number of riots in the year 1921-22 when the celebrations of Mohurram were followed by serious riots both in Bengal and the Punjab. Again in 1922-23 there occurred a number of communal riots. In March and April 1923, there were disturbances in Multan and in other parts of the Punjab like Amritsar, near the scene of the Jallianwalla Bagh massacre. During this time Mian Fazal Ali Hussain was appointed a minister in the Punjab and his exceedingly favouritism for Musalmans in the affairs of appointment to public jobs caused considerable antagonism in the minds of Hindus and Sikhs. In June and July 1924, there took place communal riots in Moradabad, Meerut and Allahabad districts, and a serious disturbance at Ajmer. In August and

full knowledge of the British authorities in Kohat that it was the young Jiwan Das who by writing a pamphlet derogatory to the Muslim Prophet, had paved the way for trouble. Nevertheless, he had been released on bail. When the Muslims heard it, tension became serious again. On that night there was held a large meeting at which the young Muslims took the divorce oath that they would take matters into their own hands if the Deputy Commissioner failed to assure them that he was going to see justice done over the pamphlet. The taking of the divorce oath was a very serious warning sign which ought to have been looked after and investigated by the British bureaucrats. Instead they ~~threw~~ the whole blame on the Hindus and Muslims. They held that the proceeding of the night meeting were actually reported by the Muslim Sergeant (present at the meeting) to the Hindu Deputy Inspector, but the latter lulled into security, they supposed, by previous false alarms, failed to pass on the report to Mr. Lillie, the Deputy Chief Commissioner.<sup>53</sup> But one fails to understand that the British authorities, who have been known for their remarkably efficient Intelligence Service, had sent only a Muslim constable to report on the deliberations of the meeting

(previous footnote contd.)

September, there were further disturbances of a serious nature at Amritsar, Panipat, Jubbulpore, Gonda, Agra and Rai Bareilly. Equally serious was the occurrence of the communal riot at Saharanpur, during the celebration of the Mohurram, followed by similar riots at Delhi, Nagpur, Lahore, Lucknow, Bhagalpur, Shahjahanpur and Kankinarah also. According to official calculation the number of riots went on increasing from 1922 onwards. There were eleven in 1923, eighteen in 1924, sixteen in 1925, thirty-five in 1926 and thirty-one up to November 1927. [R. Coupland, *Report on the Constitutional Problem in India*, Part I (1942), p. 75.] For further study on communal disturbances, see letters written by Jawaharlal Nehru to Gandhiji in 1924, S. Gopal, ed. by, *Selected Works of Jawahar Lal Nehru* (Orient Longman, 1972), Vol. II pp. 169-97, & 238-39 and Y. B. Mathur, *Muslims and Changing India* (New Delhi, 1972), pp. 1-9.

<sup>53</sup>. For further study see *Kohat Riots*; Home (Political Department), Government of India, File No. 249/VIII/1924, p. 5.

and he was ordered only to report to a minor officer of the police. An unbiased observer, arguing from the known facts of the Kohat tragedy would say that the British rulers would have to meet the following charges:

(a) There was obviously great tension between the two communities at least from a week earlier than the actual hostilities broke out. How was it that British rulers failed to take adequate steps to prevent its culminating as it did?

(b) Kohat was a large cantonment with an English Superintendent of Police and English Deputy Commissioner. The British authorities, therefore, had in their favour available all that machinery which they thought was necessary for the preservation of peace between two communities. Nevertheless, they permitted some young Muslims to rush off to the main market place owned by the Hindu merchants and declare there at the top of their voice that they had won their case (in the court of the Deputy Commissioner), and to bang at the doors of the Hindus in derision. This appeared to have sent the Hindus already panic-stricken out of their senses. They opened fire on the Muslim boys and anarchy prevailed for a considerable period. Moreover, peace had only been restored by the enforced evacuation of one of the communities. How was it that the British authorities with all the machinery at their disposal could not stop the riot, protect life and property and restore order?

(c) Frontier constabulary and in a lesser degree the Police and Military, instead of protecting the people participated in looting; in fact had it not been for their presence the looting would have been less.

(d) In pursuit of their policy of the *Divide et Impera* the British authorities had Frontier Constabulary of wholly Muslim composition.

(e) Without the connivance of the police etc., Muslims from outside could not have entered the city on 10 September 1922.

A similar negligence and inaction was displayed by the conduct of P.C. Lahiri, Hindu Deputy Commissioner of Police in matter of taking proper precautions in connection with the Arya Samaj procession through the streets of Calcutta on 2 April 1926 when he knew that the trouble was not unlikely.<sup>54</sup> There were also charges by certain members of the public against two police officers who accompanied the Arya Samaj procession.<sup>55</sup> Besides, there was in the procession one fanatical Hindu drummer who, on approaching a mosque did not stop playing on the instrument. Rather he beat his drum more violently, which started the conflagration.<sup>56</sup> Such developments certainly infuriated the Muslim leaders. On his way to Hedjaz, at a press interview Mohamed Ali warned the Hindu Mahasabha that the rioting in Calcutta might be the precursor of a bloodier struggle and asked the Muslims to organize themselves for such a struggle.<sup>57</sup>

A report to the A.I.C.C. on 12 September 1924 on Hindu-Muslim trouble at Sambhal brings out how, while the Hindus and the Muslims quarrelled with each other, they joined together to prevent the chamars from drawing water from the wells used by the Hindus and Muslims. The problem was ultimately "solved" by the local authorities issuing orders under section 144 prohibiting the chamars from drawing water from those wells.<sup>58</sup>

54. *Reports of J. E. Armstrong, Commissioner of Police on the Calcutta Riots*; Home (Pol.) Dept., Government of India, File No. 11/XXV/1926, p. 1.

55. *Ibid*, p. 11.

56. *Ibid*, p. 14.

57. *Selected Works of Nehru*, n. 52, p. 233.

58. "Varied Facets of Nehru", *Patriot*, (New Delhi), 9 June 1972, p. 5, cols. 2-4 and S. Gopal, ed. by, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, n. 52, pp. 173-74.



### Attempts to Control the Riots

On the spreading of these communal riots on an extensive scale the national leaders felt badly perturbed. In them they saw the wiping out of all the work they had done in the past to attain national solidarity. To undermine their influence they organized public meetings, held fast and called upon the people to eradicate the religious distinctions and fanatic outlook and to work in close collaboration for the national emancipation, and establish communal harmony. To create the spirit of fellow citizenship they pointed out that there existed no racial distinction between a Punjabi Musalman and a Punjabi Hindu, the U.P. Musalman and the U.P. Hindu, the Bihari Musalman and the Bihari Hindu, the Bengali Musalman and the Bengali Hindu, and the Madrasi Musalman and the Madrasi Hindu. Really speaking there was more racial affinity between the Madrasi Musalman and the Madrasi Brahmin than there was between the Madrasi Musalman and the Punjabi Musalman. The speech delivered by Lala Lajpat Rai in the Belgaum Congress on this problem was most appealing, touching and rousing even the dead patriotic passions.<sup>59</sup> But equally touching was the speech delivered by Deoji Kanji, shariff of Bombay in the sixteenth annual session of the All-India Muslim League on 30 December 1924. He pointed out: "India is the Homeland of the Muslims as of Hindus, by the same *sanad*.... The blood of the Pandavas and Kourawas flows in the veins of the overwhelming majority of the Muslims of India. They are the blood-brothers of the Hindus."<sup>60</sup>

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59. *Report of the proceedings of the thirty-ninth session of the Indian National Congress*, pp. 80-91.

It is also interesting to recall that in 1926 a Manifesto was issued in the name of CPI against Hindu-Muslim riots and for communal unity. [*New Age* (monthly), April 1958].

60. Summary Report of the proceedings of the sixteenth session of the All-India Muslim League, published in *Indian Review* (Madras, 1925) Vol. XXVI, p. 97.

## Fast by Mahatma Gandhi

Gandhiji who was already released, had also been much perturbed by the abrupt undoing of his life's mission. Through the pages of his weekly journals he tried his best to check the communal orgy. A whole issue of *Young India* was devoted to the problem. He argued that if the nation had understood his technique the communal tension could have never taken the form it did. His technique of non-violence could bring not only the national freedom but also the peace between the communities. He also held that a civilized society which had discarded violence as a means of settling individual disputes, could also eschew violence for reconciling differences between groups. Disagreements could be resolved by mutual tolerance and compromise. "Hearts can never be united by breaking heads".<sup>61</sup> To Gandhiji, the issue of friction between the two communities appeared a travesty of true religion. Was it a religion, he enquired, that drove a group of Hindu worshippers to lead a procession noisily before a mosque just as the "faithful" knelt for prayer? Was it a religious obligation laid on the Muslims to lead cows to slaughter to injure the feelings of his Hindu neighbours? And what was the utility of proselytizing when the conversion did not lead to moral or spiritual uplift, but "crossing from one compartment to another, with one thing on the lips and another in the heart?"<sup>62</sup>

By probing thus into the causes of conflict and by appealing to the good sense of the communities, Gandhiji had hoped to restore peace. But communal tension showed no signs of abatement. Speeches and homilies failed to produce the necessary remedy. Riots again broke out in Amethi, Sambhal<sup>63</sup> and Gulbarga. But above all were the terrible riots at Kohat in September 1924.

61. Mahatma Gandhi, n. 40, pp. 106-10.

62. *Ibid*, p. 119.

63. For detailed study see *The Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru* N.52 pp. 169-82.

There was a time when during the days of Non-Co-operation and Khilafat thousands of people thronged the railway stations when leaders like Mahatma Gandhi, the Ali Brothers visited a particular city or town. But the whole process reversed during the communal riots. To study the problem of Kohat riots Mahatma Gandhi accompanied by Maulana Shaukat Ali and others paid a visit to Rawalpindi. With the exception of half a dozen local non-co-operators, no one went to the railway station of Lahore to meet them, although this visit of Mahatma had been bruited aboard for over a week. A day before starting Maulana Shaukat Ali had sent telegrams to Dr. Kitchlew, Zafar Ali Khan of the *Zamindar* newspaper and other local Khilafatists to meet the party at the Lahore railway station and accompany it to Rawalpindi. A week before the Mahatma and his party left Delhi for Rawalpindi, the letters had been addressed to Kohat, requesting the attendance of the Khilafat leaders and some representative Muslims in Kohat, who might be said to possess a representative character. But with the exception of three noted nationalists, viz. Pir Ahmed Gul and Pir Kamal and Amir Chand Bombwal accompanied by some local Muslims and Hindus, they refused point blank to respond to the invitations issued by Maulana Shaukat Ali. Furthermore, on the instructions of prominent national leaders Zafar Ali Khan of *Zamindar* called a public meeting of Lahore Muslims. The attendance at the meeting was in thousands, yet it is revealing to note that the total amount subscribed to help the victims of Kohat riots and to maintain Hindu-Muslim unity, in response to Zafar Ali Khan's eloquent exhortations, did not exceed sixty-five rupees.<sup>64</sup>

Mahatma Gandhi sought the necessary remedy to communal riots in a twenty-one days fast at Maulana Mohamed Ali's house at Delhi. To justify his action he issued the following statement on 25 September 1924 :

64. *Kohat Riots* : Home (Pol.) Department, Government of India, File No. 249/VIII/924, pp. 75-7.

I publish the fast as (let me hope) an effective prayer both to Hindus and Mussalmans who are now fighting like cats and dogs...not to commit suicide. It is a warning to Hindus and Mussalmans who have professed to love, they will do penance with me....To revile one another's religion, to make reckless statements, to utter untruth, to break the heads of innocent men, to desecrate temples or mosques, is a denial of God. The world is watching—some with glee and some with sorrow -- the dog-fight that is proceeding in our midst.<sup>65</sup>

On the occasion a joint statement was also issued on 22 September 1924 by Pt. Nehru and others saying: "Today we eat and sleep and quarrel, and he fasts and weeps and lies sleepless, laden with sorrow at the disgrace and disunity that have descended as a curse on this land of ours. We have paid little heed to his words. Now we hold his life in our hands. By our conduct we shall determine our worthiness of the great and noble soul who came to lead our country out of bondage and misery."<sup>66</sup>

The country's reaction to the fast was instantaneous. The *Shuddi* and *Sangathan* movement were suspended by the Hindus and similarly too the *Tabligh* and *Tanzim* by the Muslims. To retrieve the situation further and to relieve the Mahatma's agony of distress Maulana Mohamed Ali, Hakim Ajmal Khan and Swami Shraddhanand, decided immediately to invite some 200 prominent public leaders of various parties and communities to assemble at Delhi in a Unity Conference.

In response to this call the Congress leaders, Liberals, Englishmen---altogether 300 people came over to Delhi from all over the country. The Lord Bishop of Calcutta and the

65. M. K. Gandhi, *Communal Unity* : a collection of his writings (Ahmedabad, 1949), pp. 86-7.

66. *Selected Works of Nehru*, n. 52, p. 184. See also the draft note on Delhi Conference, *Ibid*, pp. 184-85,

*Statesman* made good endeavours to get the Europeans interested in the proceedings of the Conference.

The Unity Conference began its sitting on 26 September, 1924. The hall was well decorated with mottos in various languages. Most notable among them were the following :—

“Man was born free, but he is everywhere in chains.”

“There is no redemption for India without liberty.”

“No Swaraj without any unity and no unity without love.”<sup>67</sup>

Opening the proceedings of the Conference Maulana Moh-amed Ali pointed out that all the bitterness, rancour and illwill between the communities had unfortunately crept in the name of religion. Their quarrels had nothing to do with the religion. He also lamented over the belying of belief built up in 1920 that “the unity was a solid fact, and out of that unity they expected to grow true national progress.”<sup>68</sup> Presiding over deliberations of the Conference Pandit Motilal Nehru lamented over the fact that they had met there “under the shadow of a great national humiliation”.<sup>69</sup> Was it not disgracing, the speaker pointed out, that ‘on the one hand, they had internecine quarrels resulting in bloodshed, plunder, raping and desecration of places of worship and, on the other, the personality to whom India “owed all her present awakening” was fasting as a penance for the “sins of the land.”’<sup>70</sup> In a resolution the Conference affirmed the freedom of conscience and religion, but condemned the use of compulsion and violence as barbarous.<sup>71</sup> It also passed a number of resolutions designed to generate goodwill and dissipate mutual suspicion. It also deprecated the attempts made by members of one community to boycott members of

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67. *Indian Quarterly Register*, July-December 1924 (Calcutta) Vol. II, p. 149.

68. *Ibid.*

69. *Ibid.*, p. 150.

70. *Ibid.*

71. *Ibid.*, pp. 152-3.

other communities and to stop commercial and social relations with them.<sup>72</sup>

In the open session held on 1 October 1924 the Unity Conference resolved to set up National Panchayats with power to organize and appoint local panchayats, in consultation with the local representatives of the various communities, to enquire into and settle all disputes. Mahatma Gandhi was elected its chairman and convener; Hakim Ajmal Khan, Lajpat Rai, G.K. Nariman and others being its members. The Conference also laid down certain basic rights related to the sacredness of the places of worship and prayer, cow-slaughter, and music before mosques and a statement of limitations they must be subject to.<sup>73</sup>

Gandhiji broke his fast only after the persistent persuasion of his friends. Looking primarily to an obscurantist idea of religion as his guide, on the last day of the fast he prayed and sang his favourable hymns preaching communal concord.<sup>74</sup>

There is not the slightest element of doubt that Gandhiji was an anti-communalist *par excellence*. He defined Hinduism as a religion of human brotherhood and as such whole-heartedly opposed all communal and other distinctions between human beings. He considered both Muslim and Hindu communalism as anti-national as well as anti-human. He deprecated and fought both these passionately and with all his indefatigable energy. By resorting to long fasts he even staked his life to curb and extinguish all the ugly forms of communalism. On his being assassinated by a communalist fanatic Hindu on 30 January 1948 millions of narrow-minded and fanatic Muslims must be

72. *Ibid*, p 134.

73. *Ibid*, p. 155.

74. Adhering to the same mysticism Maulana Mohamed Ali brought a cow from the slaughter house and offered it to the Mahatma as a symbol of his affection and goodwill for him. [Rajendra Prasad, *Autobiography* (Asia Publishing House, 1957), p. 226.

feeling puzzled how a Hindu could so nobly, bravely, unhesitatingly and knowingly lay down his life and die from the shots of his own co-religionist for 'saving the life of the Muslims in India. How petty-minded Jinnah must be looking before the Muslim millions when he characterized Gandhiji's demise as only the passing away of the "greatest Hindu leader"?

### **Unity Efforts Failed**

In spite of these heroic and persistent endeavours of the national leaders to achieve it, the peace did not last very long. The tragic fact, however, emerged that the communal antagonism, instead of declining, became accentuated from stage to stage in the most devastating Hindu-Muslim clashes recorded in history. Passion and prejudice dethroned sanity and reason, partisanship and irrationality replaced comradeship and amity, the blindness exorcised tolerance, with some exceptions, thus sabotaging the edifice of our national and civil life. Feeling perhaps much pleased over the discord Lord Birkenhead wrote to the Viceroy: "All the conferences in the world cannot bridge the unbridgeable."<sup>75</sup> To the House of Lords he told on 7 July 1925. "There is...no 'Lost Dominion'."<sup>76</sup> Subsequently the national leaders also confessed that bitter experience had taught them that those who uttered the word unity meant disunity. Disgusted with religion Jawaharlal Nehru had written to Syed Mahmud from Geneva on 12 September 1926 :

Religion as practised in India has become the old man of the sea for us and it has not only broken our backs but stifled and almost killed all originality of thought and mind. Like Sinbad the Sailor, we must get rid of this terrible burden before we can aspire to breathe freely or do anything useful.

75. Account rendered by his son, Second Earl of Birkenhead, F. E., *Life of F.E. Smith, the First Earl of Birkenhead* (London, 1960), p. 507.

76. *Ibid*, p. 509.

In his letter he also warned :

No country or people who are slaves to dogma and dogmatic mentality can progress, and unhappily our country and people have become extraordinarily dogmatic and little-minded.<sup>77</sup>

In still another letter to Syed Mahmud on 12 January 1927 from Montana, Switzerland, Nehru continued to speak against this kind of dogmatism :

...the blight of religion with its handmaids, ignorance and refusal to think, are upon us and the imaginative glory of the past, like the old man of the sea, crushes us....I have no patience left with the legitimate and illegitimate offspring of religion.<sup>78</sup>

Nehru and Mahmud continued to exchange their interesting correspondence. On being asked by the latter why Hindus and Muslims could not live peacefully in their country when the followers of various religions were friendly enough to each other, Nehru gave the simple reply that the various communities of other countries had largely shed their religions whilst the Hindus and Muslims were steeped in superstition and religion. He added :

Here in Europe and elsewhere few persons, excepting some Roman Catholics, lay much stress on religion with the result that their conflicts are not religious but economic.... As soon as we shed our religion we shall also behave better.<sup>79</sup>

The cure of the disease depended on a scientific diagnosis of the disease. Unlike Pt. Nehru, Gandhiji traced the reasons

77. S. Gopal, ed. by, *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, n. 52, p. 242.

78. *Ibid*, p. 255.

79. *Ibid*, p. 329.



of communal antagonism not to the material life processes of Indian society but to the weak ethical structure of the people. The technique of scientific process of historical materialism—the technique to combat communalism—did not occur to Mahatma Gandhi due to his *petty bourgeois* class outlook. He could not trace the basic causes of social and political drawbacks of the Indian society including communalism in the specific bourgeois-cum-feudal socio-economic structure of the society controlled by foreign imperialism, but wrongly discovered their origin in the underdeveloped sense of the Indian people. And here, unscientific idealistic and scientific materialistic analysis of the causes of social weaknesses clashed. Gandhi, the great nationalist and humanist left no stone unturned to extinguish communalism for over thirty years of his long political career by means such as passionate patriotic appeals, fasts, passionate soundings of individual's human depths, repeated fasts, signing of pacts, organizing of prayers in mass congregation. But in the long run these methods proved futile. Though temporarily they succeeded in introducing a psychological change, yet communalism gradually became more and more accentuated.

Different explanations have been put forward to justify the emergence of Muslim communalism, its growth and mass grip over the Indian Muslims. Some hold Jinnah as the arch-culprit who, by methods of diabolical shrewdness, successfully intensified communalism in the minds of the Indian Muslims. Others propound that the Muslim religion has something inherent in it to convert its adherents into communal fanatics.

These seem to be superficial, unscientific justifications of the growth of communalism whether Hindu or Muslim.

Mere demagoguery and diplomatic cunningness of a leader could not bring into existence a mass movement. Mere religious appeal could not mobilize a mass movement unless there perpetuated, as a precondition, a social and economic

base for that appeal to fructify. Even the most cunning imperialism could not manufacture communalism within an enslaved nation unless there was a social basis within it. An analysis based on the scientific process of historical materialism, therefore, could only provide a right answer to the quest of communalism. Instead of making the quest on scientific lines a group of reactionaries--both Hindu and Muslim--transformed the healthy economic discontent of poverty-stricken peasantry (of both Hindus and Muslims) into a fanatical communal frenzy which diverted their attention from a joint movement (of Hindu and Muslim peasantry for the abolition of *zamindari* system and the cancellation of debts) to an orgy of loot, arson, rape, forced conversions and murders. As a result, the peasants lost their class outlook, ceased to feel themselves as a united front of the Indian peasantry, and became communal fanatics filled with unprecedented contempt for all whether workers, peasants or landlords of the counterpart community. It will be most appropriate to elaborate this standpoint by citing certain illustrations. The most shocking development that gave a definite setback to the cause of Hindu-Muslim unity, was the outbreak of the Moplah riots. The hostile communal attitude adopted by some of the Moplah leaders after the temporary overthrow of British rule, was certainly provocative. On the establishment of the Moplah Republic one of Moplah leaders categorically stated: "We shall give Hindus the option of death or Islam. We have the example of the Holy Prophet that it is a good act to kill for God's work.. The Jews and Christians, as believers in a revealed book, may be tolerated, but the idolatrous Hindus can only be allowed to live in a Muslim State on sufferance. You know it is said in our book that when Mecca and Medina are held by non-Muslims, it is the time to fight for the Khilafat and after this fight which will bring victory to us there will be no non--Muslim in this world."<sup>80</sup>

- The attitude adopted by certain Muslim leaders who were on the forefront of the national struggle in 1920-21, towards

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80. P. C. Bamford, Deputy Director, Central Intelligence Bureau, n. 32, pp. 175-76.

the Moplah disturbances made a number of genuine nationalists sceptical and suspicious about their *bona fides* and loyalty to the cause of Indian nationalism. Argument advanced by fanatics like Maulana Hasrat Mohani in the meeting of the Congress Subjects Committee that the Moplahs were right in presenting the *Quran* or sword to the Malabar Hindus—without making a distinction between the oppressive and unoppressive Hindus—looks very ridiculous. Hasrat Mohani's addition in his speech that if the Hindus became Muslims to save themselves from death, it was a voluntary change of faith and not forcible conversion worked as a further insult to an already committed injury.<sup>81</sup>

The All-India Muslim League which had lost its importance during the national struggle of 1919-22, re-emerged in its old communal garb. Its branch in Amritsar district met on 10 November 1924 and passed a resolution supporting Money Lenders' Registration Bill to be moved in the Punjab Legislative Council during forthcoming session.<sup>82</sup>

There were a number of Muslim leaders whose devotion and sincerity to the service of India was beyond doubt. But they were also swept away in the bitterness created by the communal disturbances and the proselytizing activities conducted respectively by the followers of the two religions. Like the Hindu communalists their attitude was not very much assuring to the maintenance of national solidarity. It is obvious from the numerous utterances of Muslim leaders. For the perusal of the reader is quoted below a statement delivered by Saifuddin Kitchlew in a meeting held in Lahore on 9 August 1924 :

The Congress was lifeless till the Khilafat Committee put life in it. When the Khilafat Committee joined it, it did in

81. For further study see Swami Shradhdhanand, n. 2, pp. 150-52; also see Gandhi, n. 40, pp. 65-74.

82. Home (Pol.) Dept, Government of India, File No. 421/1924, p. 3.

one year what the Hindu Congress had done in 40 years. The Congress also did the work of uplifting the several crores of untouchables. This was purely a work for the Hindus, and yet the money of the Congress was spent on it like water. But the brave Musalmans did not mind. Then why should the Hindus quarrel with us when we Musalmans take up the *Tanzim* work and spend on it money that belongs neither to the Hindus nor to the Congress?

He further stated :

If we remove British rule from this country and establish *Swarāj*, and if the Afghans or other Muslims invade India, then we Moslems will oppose them and sacrifice all our sons in order to save the country from the invasion. But one thing I shall declare plainly. Listen, my Hindu brother, listen very attentively: If you put obstacles in the path of our *Tanzim* movement, and do not give us our rights, we shall make common cause with Afghanistan or some other Muslim Power and establish our rule in this country.<sup>83</sup>

Here it is also to be remembered that certain Muslims started in 1923-24 the *Tabligh* and *Tanzim* movements.<sup>84</sup> By organizing these movements they displayed the same intolerance like the Hindu Sabha leaders. Belonging to a religion which provides much scope to tolerance and democratic tendencies it was difficult to understand their standpoint and action.

### Shuddhi and Sangathan

The forcible conversion of certain Hindus and the inhuman behaviour committed against them by the Moplahs

83. Saifuddin Kitchlew, "Through Indian Eyes", *Times of India* (Bombay) 10 August 1924, p. 6.

84. For further study see Y. B. Mathur, *Muslims and Changing India* (New Delhi, Trimurti Publishers, 1972), pp. 182-90; Home Dept. (Pol. Branch), Files for 12 October 1924, inserting official comments.

and later in the Multan communal disturbances where temples and Gurdwaras were desecrated and some of the Hindus' houses were either looted or burnt, led to the creation of a strong apprehension in the minds of certain Hindu leaders. However, the remedy found by them to meet this emergent situation was far from satisfactory to the national salvation. Instead of going deep into the reasons of these disturbances (viz. the clash, first, of the socio-economic interests between Hindu Zamindars and money-lenders and the Muslim peasantry in Malabar and the Punjab; secondly, of aspirations of the *bourgeois* and *petty-bourgeois* classes in the two communities) they found out a remedy, which could work only temporarily leaving the main problem as unsettled as before. They started the *Shuddhi* (reclamation) movement for the conversion of Muslims particularly Malkana Rajputs to the Hindu fold. But these Muslims most of whom belonged to the poor classes, did not require so much the spiritual, as the economic and social reclamation. It was beyond expectation to convert them to a religion whose upper classes were socially and economically exploiting them. A detailed study of this aspect has been made in the subsequent pages.

In these circumstances the insistence of the fanatical Hinduism on the indivisibility of the country, could not make any sense, because one of the elements that bifurcated the country later on, was primarily this Hindu fanaticism. "It was like the murderer recoiling from his crime, after it had been done."<sup>85</sup> There appeared to be no doubt that this Hindu fanaticism did primarily nothing to bring Muslim close to the Hindu within a single national entity. It did almost everything that estranged them from each other. To propagate the philosophy of estrangement and, simultaneously, the concept of *Akhand Bharat*, appeared an action of grievous self-deception, only if assumed that those who did so were honest persons.

85. Ram Manohar Lohia, *Guilty Men of India's Partition* (Allahabad, 1960), p. 7.

But, above all, was the painful fact that Swami Shraddhanand was perhaps emotionally swept away by the communal disturbances. By actively associating himself with sectarian movement of *Shuddhi* and *Sangathan*<sup>86</sup> he abrogated his recent past - the secular and nationalist past - when he had emerged as the unchallenged and indisputable apostle of Hindu-Muslim unity in the common struggle of both the communities against the promulgation of the Rowlatt Act in particular and the eradication of the foreign rule, in general. After all, a community whose people in large numbers had enthusiastically collaborated with Hindus till recently, could not be wholly bad. Without perhaps going deeper into the causes of communal animosity he tried to argue his defection from the main ideals of nationalism, which was as painful and tragic as that of Sir Syed in the nineteenth century, on superficial grounds. This communal approach culminating in his endeavour to reconvert the Malkana Rajputs who were originally Hindus but subsequently embraced Islam, perhaps led another fanatic Muslim to murder him. Besides, it also antagonized many a prominent Muslim who were so far closely associated with the national movement. Among them was also Maulana Mohamed Ali whose feelings, according to Dr. Rajendra Prasad, were so much outraged that he associated himself with the defence of Swamiji's murderer. Hindus interpreted it to mean that the Maulana was in sympathy with the culprit.<sup>87</sup>

Anticipating the development of such unfavourable conditions Jawaharlal Nehru had already forbidden the Congressmen from participating in any kind of reclamation movement. In a letter he wrote:

Only it pains me that it unnecessarily promotes ill-will and this hampers our work for *Swaraj*. I have also given

86. For further study see Y. B. Mathur, *Muslims and Changing India*, n. 84, pp 25-28, 31-39 & 184-85. For the perverted views of Shraddhanand see his *Hindu Sangathan* (Delhi, March, 1926).

87. Rajendra Prasad, n. 74, p, 261,

my personal views that I would like the Congress officials not to take much interest in the propagation of the 'Shuddhi' movement. I believe that if prominent workers of the Congress take part in 'Shuddhi', people might think that it is a part of the Congress programme. In this manner the Congress would become an institution of a particular caste or religion. So if presidents and secretaries of Congress Committees wish to work for 'Shuddhi', it would be better if they resigned from their official positions. This is my opinion about those who work for 'Shuddhi' as well as those who work against it. I never said that workers for 'Shuddhi' are traitors to the country or that they should be treated as enemies. I had used these words in another context which had nothing to do with 'Shuddhi'. Some listeners might have mixed up the two statements.<sup>88</sup>

Nehru was clear that *Shuddhi* and *Sangathan* movements would create friction rather than unity between various communities. He called upon the people not to be misled by these intrigues. He wrote:

I could not help noticing that the 'Shuddhi' movement had aroused keen controversy and our national workers were distracted on account of it. I expressed a desire that it would have been better for this question not to have been taken up then. I had been asked what Congress workers should do in the matter. It was of course open to every Hindu and every Muslim to act according to his convictions, but it was clear that the Congress could not take any part on either side. The Congress was meant for every Indian and as such it could not identify itself with a controversial religious matter. I recommended that the principal workers and office-bearers of Congress Committees should not take an active part in the movement as other-

88. *Selected Works of Nehru*, Vol. I, n. 52, p. 358,

wise people would be justified in thinking that the Congress was helping behind the scenes. Besides, I thought that any one, Hindu or Muslim, taking an active part in the 'Shuddhi' movement on either side, could not remain a very effective national worker. He would have little time to spare for national activities and he would be suspected by the other community. I do feel that those gentlemen, both Hindus and Muslims, who have actively worked amongst the Malkanas, have lessened their utility from a national point of view.<sup>89</sup>

Resuming the study of the socioeconomic causes of rise and growth of communalism in the economic sphere the crisis was predominantly an agrarian one. The system of land tenure in India exhibited almost every conceivable difference, from large estates, containing thousands of tenants, to smallest peasant holdings of under an acre in size. A larger area of lands was controlled by the landlords who were often 'parasites' living on their tenants, wasting their time and corrupting the indigenous social life. With certain exceptions they neither developed their lands themselves nor permitted others to develop them, and their only vague idea of patriotism was momentary outrage of religious fanaticism, intolerance and frenzy. This approach towards the worldly existence was bound to grow discontent in the peasants, culminating in a quarrel. The development of this new situation had its impact upon communal crisis. where the feudal lord, who was looked upon as the exploiter, happened to be Hindu, while his tenants were Muslims, or *vice-versa*.

Besides the low yielding from the land and the handing over the major share of the product to the landlord, the personal resources being very meagre, their necessity of spending some money on the occasion of religious or social festivals forced peasants to borrow money from the local moneylender

89. *Ibid*, p. 357,



who charged sometimes the interest paid exceeding ten times of the principal amount borrowed. According to the information collected by Rahmat Ali, the founder of the Pakistan National Movement, for every rupee a peasant paid to the Government as land revenue, he paid no less than eighteen as interest to the money-lending institutions.<sup>90</sup> According to a British observer the usual interest rates charged by the moneylender "varied from 18½ to 37½ per cent." The moneylender was not so powerful before the British, but the English courts removed all the social restraints that curbed his rates. Under British rule the class of moneylenders increased and prospered exceedingly, so much so that the number of bankers and moneylenders increased from 53,263 in 1868 to 193,890 in 1911.<sup>91</sup> Hardly there existed any other state agency like the co-operative banks to assist the poor farmer. The inability of the peasant to repay the debt in time provided an easy opportunity to the moneylender to oppress him. This clash of interests culminated in most of the cases in a quarrel. The problem used to become more acute and tense where the moneylender happened to be a Hindu and the peasants being Muslims or *vice-versa*. Communal riots were often the consequences. Distressed with the greedy ambitions of the moneylenders he was openly designated as "Hindu" or "Muslim", as the situation might be. He was also talked about as the Hindu or Muslim exploiter. In the middle of the thirties there was issued a leaflet by the Ahmadiya *Anjuman-i-Ishat-i-Islam* of Lahore. In it the writer stated forcefully:

90. Rahmat Ali, *What does the Pakistan National Movement Stand For* (Cambridge, 1933), p. 4.

91. Sir Malcolm Darling, *The Punjab Peasant* (London, 1947) pp. 173, 175, and 180.

It may be recalled that most of the moneylending business of the Punjab was controlled by three Hindu castes: the *Banya* or *Aggarwal*, the *Khatris*, and the *Arora*. They were alleged to have partitioned the province between themselves. South of the Sutlej the *Banya* prevailed; in the Central Punjab the *Khatris* and throughout the West the *Arora*. [*Ibid*, p.176.]

Poverty has become the badge of a Musalman. There is hardly one who does not owe some amount or the other to the Hindu money-lender. Day by day the immovable property of the Musalmans is passing into the hands of the Hindus, and whatever they earn by the sweat of their brow goes in some shape or other to strengthen the other community....Muslim Punjab alone owes a debt of about Rs.15,000,000,000, on which they pay to the *Banya* (Hindu money-lender) an annual interest of Rs. 250,000,000, full one-half of their total annual earnings of Rs. 500,000,000. One half thus finds its way into the pockets of others as interest. It comes to this, then, that whatever we earn belongs to other. Or, to put it in other words, our position in this country is that of slaves; for what else is a slave but one who labours for others ?<sup>92</sup>

Aggrieved by the distress of the Muslim peasantry Mohammed Iqbal, in one of his excited moments, wrote his fiery trilogy *Lenin, Angel's Song and God's Command*:

Arise and awake the poor of my world,  
 Shake up the very foundations of the palaces of the rich;  
 Warm the blood of slaves with the fire of faith. . . .  
 Give the humble sparrow to fight the falcon;  
 Burn every ear of corn in the field;  
 Which is not used as food for the cultivator.<sup>93</sup>

Expressing similar sentiments for the poor Muslim labour he also composed the following verse:

The lot of the hapless labourer is very hard!  
 When will the boat of capitalism be wrecked.<sup>94</sup>

92 *Tribune* (Lahore), 25 August 1932.

93. *Qulliyat-e-Iqbal*, a collection of Iqbal's poems (Delhi), pp. 392-93,

94, *Ibid*, p. 395,

If studied from a literary point of view, there was nothing wrong with such radical appeals of the poet. They were no less stirring than Bankim's *Bande Matram*. An unbiased observer, however, cannot overlook the circumstances in which the appeals were issued, as he cannot overlook the context in which the song of *Bande Matram* was composed by Bankim Chandra. Iqbal's retrieve into Pan-Islamism was as much obstructive to the growth of secular healthy nationalism as that of Bankim into Hindu mythology. Both of them wanted to end exploitation but only by using the communal techniques.

Shortly after the death of Swami Shraddhanand and the composition of trilogy by Iqbal both of whom made sectarian efforts to resolve the Hindu-Muslim crisis, there emerged in the Punjab another leader, namely, Sir Chhottu Ram. Perhaps his understanding of the communal problem was more rational and logical than many other Hindu leaders. Soon after his inclusion in the Punjab Cabinet he introduced certain land reformatory measures like the Debt Redemption Act. These economic measures provided an immediate relief to the peasantry consisted both of Hindus and Muslims. Though due to his dependence on the rich peasantry for the election to the Punjab Legislative Council in limitation to the constitutional structure, he could not introduce much radical reforms in the structure of the rural economy, but whatever he could do within the constitutional limitations earned him a great popularity in the Muslim predominated rural areas in the West Punjab. Though he had no similarity with those Muslim peasants culturally, linguistically and above all religiously, yet he was very much liked by them. He was affectionately called "*taou*" (elder uncle) by them. He had protected them from the greedy ambitions of the exploiters and moneylenders, majority of whom were upper class Hindus. By acting in close collaboration with the leaders of rural Muslim peasantry like Sir Sikander Hayat Khan and Khizar Hayat Khan he succeeded to a major extent in establishing a Hindu-Muslim *entente* manifesting in the form of the Unionist Party in the Punjab. This approach

perhaps never allowed the Muslim League or other communal organizations to be the determining factors in the provincial politics at least till his death in 1943. On the other hand, the Indian National Congress remained confined to the upper class Hindus in the urban areas of the Punjab. Despite having a programme of mass interests on all India level, it could hardly penetrate the rural areas in the Punjab.

Similar was the problem in case of the Muslim money-lenders belonging to the Khoja community or the Pathans of the North-West Frontier Province. The Khojas were notorious for charging 15 to 50 per cent of interest from the Hindu debtors. But no less mischievous were the Pathan moneylenders who lent to the poor workers in the industrial centres in big cities like Bombay. Their dealings with the workers often culminated in communal riots. In 1929 an official investigation made in connection with the riots in Bombay revealed that the immediate factors of the trouble "were the attacks made on Pathans, as a result of the rumour that Pathans were kidnapping children and were taking to Baroda to be sacrificed on the foundation of a bridge that was being built there....The opportunity was also taken to attack the rooms of the Pathan moneylenders in the locality, to murder them, plunder their dwellings and in one case destroy their documents."<sup>95</sup>

Serious riots that thus broke out in Bombay, continued till the 12 February 1928 resulting in 137 killed and 783 injured according to the official report. The so-called communal riot, however, really originated with a labour trouble. J. Crearar, the Government Home Member, analysed the situation in the following words :

As the House is aware, the industrial labouring population in Bombay has for some time been in a state of great unsettlement....The events that led up to the pres-

<sup>95</sup>. *Report of the Bombay Riots Enquiry Committee (1939)*, p. 10.

ent outbreak may be said to have started with the strikes that broke out on December 7th (1928) under the Communist leadership at the oil companies' installations. Oil companies engaged Pathan workmen in place of the strikers (mostly Hindus). Several disturbances arose in consequence between the strikers and Pathans. On January 18, apparently as the result of a general ill-feeling between the Pathans and the mill hands, three Pathan watchmen of New China Mills were murdered by the mill-hands.<sup>96</sup>

To study these events in the proper perspective it is essential to remember that all these oil companies were mostly British concerns and managed by British agents. It was these Britishers that deliberately imported Pathan workmen as scabs to break the resistance of their striking workmen. The responsibility, therefore, of the initial labour trouble and the consequent ghastly riots must lie on the shoulders of the British concerns.

Originally the quarrel developed between workers and Pathans in certain isolated parts of the city. But it was manoeuvred by the agent provocateurs into a communal trouble, which gradually spread over the whole city, bringing Hindus and Muslims, who were in no way linked with industry and who were unaware of the original causes of the disturbance, into direct conflict and strife. Both the sides considered the struggle as an obvious attempt to safeguard the economic status of their respective religious communities.

Further, there was a clash of interests between the powerful Hindu *bourgeoisie* and weaker Muslim *bourgeoisie*. It is true that both the Muslim League and the Indian National Congress basically reflected and served the interests of the upper classes of the Indian society, the former as the political

96. Cited by Indulal K. Yajnik, *Gandhi As I Knew Him* (Delhi, Danish Mahal, 1943), pp. 447-49,

the feudal and *bourgeois* groups of the Muslim League, the latter as that of the Indian *bourgeoisie* as a fact that both were frankly anti-radical. The differences between them, nevertheless, lay in the point that the Muslim League had a reactionary communal social basis and continued, with the minor exception of a short duration, throughout to be pro-imperialist in its political behaviour, while the Indian Congress had a secular approach and a national basis. The Muslim League communalism culminated into the fantastic theory that the Muslims by themselves are a nation and that religious denominations and not classes determine their interests.

Under the pressure of the Leftist forces the Congress agreed to adopt a programme of the economic amelioration of the masses at its Karachi session in March 1931. A resolution in this connection was also adopted by the A.I.C.C. in August 1931 at Bombay.<sup>97</sup> Adoption of this economic programme created much apprehension in the upper classes. To allay their fears Gandhiji told them that their rights would also be safeguarded. They would function as the trustees of the poor people. This led to the development of controversy in the masses. Again they became uncertain about the genuineness of the Congress to ameliorate their lot. All the endeavours of the Congress Leftists, Communists, non-socialist, anti-imperialists within the Congress, through Muslim Mass Contact Committees formed in 1937-38, to defeat the Muslim League propaganda utterly proved futile since the Muslim masses judged the Congress by its deeds and not by the promises of the Congress Leftists who appeared in the eyes of Muslim masses as mercenaries of the *bourgeois* Congress to push them into its fold, no matter how much they disliked it. On the other hand, due to the preponderant Hindu social composition of Indian upper classes the Muslim League could successfully persuade the

97. For further study see Pattabhi Sitaramayya, *The History of the Indian National Congress* (Bombay, 2nd ed., 1946), pp. 462-63.

Muslim masses into believing that the Congress was a communal Hindu organization which in fact, it was not. The Indian Congress, despite its preponderant Hindu social composition, was a national, secular political body which essentially served the interests and requirements of the Indian *bourgeoisie* as a whole. Its plans and programmes, ideology and organizational framework were set up in the light of the interests of the national *bourgeoisie*.

Furthermore the Muslim League communalism attempted to divide the masses on vertical communal lines and set the Hindu workers against the Muslim workers, the Hindu peasants against the Muslim peasants, to the advantage of the respective Hindu or Muslim *bourgeoisie* and feudal lords. Such an unrealistic variation of the people in communal groups, where they collaborated with their respective Hindu or Muslim capitalist or landlord co-religionists and served the interests of the latter in their fights against the rival *bourgeoisie* and feudal lords of the other community, ultimately, obstructed the unity of the Hindu and Muslim masses. In this way it protected both Hindu and Muslim *bourgeoisie* and landlords from the united struggle of the Indian masses against the usurpers of their interests in both denominations.

For example, in Bihar, with a view to undermining the struggle of the Hindu and Muslim peasants against landlordism in that province, which was growing and compelling the Congress government to adopt certain anti-*zamindari* measures, the Hindu landlords encouraged and utilized the anti-Muslim feeling which overwhelmed the Hindu *kisans* as a result of the Muslim atrocities against the Hindus in Calcutta and Naokhali district in Bengal. They provoked them to make a large scale onslaught on the Muslim peasants, their very compatriots in struggle against *Zamindari*, Hindu as well as Muslim. While these Hindu landlords united with their compatriots in Muslims and presented a united front to the government to protect their parasitic *zamindari* rights, they split the rank and file of the peasants on

communal lines, instigating the Hindu section against the Muslim section.

This strange communalist approach, by hindering and disrupting the development of class consciousness, class unity, and united class movements of the people against their imperialist, feudal and *bourgeois* owners - Hindu, Muslim or of any other domination, only assisted to stabilize the imperialist-*bourgeois* social structure. By bifurcating the nation on communal lines, it hindered the united national liberation movement. By dividing the masses into communal groups, it obstructed the rise of the united class movements of the masses and thereby strengthened the process of class exploitation. By the disruptive role it played in national and class movements, which had a, historically speaking, progressive importance and which, when successful, would result in not only national independence but also democratic and socialist liberation of the masses, communalism ultimately benefited alien imperialists and Indian *bourgeoisie*, feudalists and landlords of all religious denominations by perpetuating the prevailing economic structure of the society based on a feudal and *bourgeois* framework.

Both the leftist wing in the Congress and other Marxist groups functioning independently, were keen to make the masses aware of these communal frenzies. In his presidential speech delivered on 27 October 1928, in the meeting of the first All-India Socialistic Youth Congress, Jawaharlal Nehru pointed out that if the attention of the masses was directed to the economic facts which mattered, they would automatically turn away from communalism and pseudo-religious mentality.<sup>98</sup> In the same meeting he expressed his belief that the various communities in India "could remove this communal spirit by socialistic ideas."<sup>99</sup>

98. *Indian Quarterly Register*, July-Dec. 1928 (Calcutta), Vol. II, p. 438.

99. *Ibid*, p. 454.



The Muslim merchants believed that it was impossible for Muslims to compete with their Hindu counterpart in trade and industrial concerns without either complete political separation from them, or the guarantee of special privileges to them by the ruling authorities for years to come. In the prevailing circumstances their interests were nominal and run on communal lines. This apprehension was illustrated by a Muslim author who pointed out that in thirties out of 2,000 odd shops in Bannu there were hardly a dozen Muslim shops.<sup>100</sup> Similarly in Lahore city though the population of the two communities was nearly balanced, yet nearly 85 per cent of the total property was perhaps controlled by Hindus and Sikhs alone.<sup>101</sup>

In between the rich and the poor there also existed the middle class respectively in both Hindus and Muslims. With the growth of political consciousness as a result of modern system of education this class in each community began to aspire for political privileges and jobs. Instead of uniting together for wresting these privileges and jobs from the alien regime the intelligentsia of both the religious groups appeared to become contestants among themselves by desiring the lion's share of Council's seats and government appointments, whether honorary or paid. And they contested like the proverbial dog not only for the bone but even for the shadow, thus leaving a free scope for the alien bureaucracy to manipulate both of them against one another. Both of them laid emphasis on their rights and privileges rather than their duties. This fact is very well illustrated by studying the events taking place after a few months of Gandhiji's fast in September 1924. On 25 December 1924 was held the annual session of the Hindu Mahasabha to discuss what steps should be taken to organize Hindu opinion and take effective measures to deal with the new demands made by the Muslim community. Leaders like Swami Shraddhanand, Lala Lajpat Rai and Malaviya urged

100. Shaukat Ullah Ansari, *Pakistan* (Lahore, 1944), p. 41.

101. Yashpal, *Simhavalokan* (Lucknow, 1951), Vol. I, p. 125.

for forming a distinctive political organization of the Hindus to safeguard their claims in regard to their representation in the Councils and services, etc. For this purpose if Government aid was required it must be taken. If this *Sangathan* became successful the Muslims would themselves woo the Hindus for friendship.<sup>102</sup> No attention was paid to non-communal Congress leaders like Gandhiji and C R. Das who were also present on such occasions and who strongly deprecated this attitude of the organizers of the Hindu Mahasabha.<sup>103</sup> But the latter were not ready to leave the work of unity to the National Congress. In their view the Congress had failed to achieve this objective because its leaders had tried hitherto to achieve communal unity by sacrificing the interests of the Hindus.<sup>104</sup> An unbiased observer may agree with the following remarks of Charles Innes, Member of Viceroy's Executive Council: "...don't be too hopeful. There is always the evil figure of the Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya in the background."<sup>105</sup>

Another instance of similar nature is equally revealing. When Mahatma Gandhi was going to Rawalpindi in January 1925 to study the issue of Kohat communal riots, Bhai Parmanad who posed as a Punjab Hindu leader, and others, according to a report of the Punjab Intelligence Bureau, prevailed upon Lala Lajpat Rai who somehow or other was not willing to go to Rawalpindi or Kohat, to go there. They were strongly of the opinion that Lalaji's presence at Rawalpindi would be a wholesome check on the so-called Mahatma's "readiness to play into the hands of the Muhammadans."<sup>106</sup>

102. *Indian Quarterly Register*, January-June 1926 (Calcutta), Vol.I, pp. 367-98

103. Summary Report of the session published in *Indian Review* (Madras, 1925) Vol. XXVI, p.103.

104. *Indian Quarterly Register*, n. 102, pp. 400-01 & 406.

105. See the Demi-official Report submitted on 3 November 1924 by Charles Innes about Kohat Riots to the Government. of India; *Kohat Riots* [Home (Pol.) Department , n. 64, p. 41].

106. *Kohat Riots*, n. 64, p. 76.

In the course of their meeting Bhai Parmanand, both for himself and on behalf of Lala Lajpat Rai, impressed on Mahatma Gandhi the advisability of abandoning his plan of getting the Muslims of Kohat to extend the hand of good fellowship to the Hindus and thereby ensure their return to Kohat. The Mahatma was reluctant to fall in with this view. He stuck to his opinions, and said he would make an effort to induce the leading Muslims in other provinces and all over India to use their influence and get the Muslims of Kohat to come round to the Mahatma's ways of thinking and endorse and work out his plans. Bhai Parmanand was most forceful and emphatic against the plan favoured by Mahatma Gandhi. He tried to impress upon the Mahatma the necessity of using his great influence with Hindus all over India to induce them to give monetary succour and to find work for those Hindus who could not or would not return to Kohat. But Mahatma Gandhi maintained all along that what Lala Lajpat Rai and Bhai Parmanand suggested was not likely to lead to a satisfactory and permanent solution to the problem. A member of the Punjab Intelligence Bureau who somehow managed to be present at such high level private meetings, further reported to J.M. Dunnett, Home Secretary to the Government of India, on the occasion of the latter's visit to Lahore in February 1925:

Thus it is clear that Mahatma Gandhi's third visit to Rawalpindi proved futile of any good results. The plight of the Kohati Hindus at present in Rawalpindi is quite sad. They are very pessimistic. The outlook before them is dark. Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya has not been able to do anything for them. Lala Lajpat Rai has proved equally useless. They have also lost all faith in Mahatma Gandhi. Their disappointment on this account is very bitter as some of them had abundant and even super-human faith in the power, influence and capacity of Mahatma Gandhi. They do not think that Government or the officials of Kohat will now do anything for them. The

more intelligent among them scarcely conceal their opinion that their case has been badly bungled, and the reason for this bungling are, •they admit,... the ineptitude of such leaders as Lajpat Rai and Madan Mohan Malaviya. It is interesting to hear these men dissecting the leaders, and discussing the Congress. Their comments, caustic as they are, proceed from the heart and certainly constitute a notable contribution to the Indian political situation as it affects the Hindus.<sup>107</sup>

All this naturally led to the creation of a sense of mutual jealousy and hatred. There were some Muslims who feared that Hindus being dominant in socio-economic life, would smother them.<sup>108</sup>

By the time Simon Commission arrived in India the relations had further strained between the communities. Presiding over the tenth annual session of the All-India Hindu Mahasabha held on 16 April, 1927 Dr. B. S. Moonje asked his co-religionists to leave Muslims alone in their prevailing mental morass, to think and act as they pleased and to try their best and get what they wanted from the Government. He also exhorted the Hindus to be wise over the so-called bitter experience of the blunder of the Lucknow Pact.<sup>109</sup> But equally devastating was the reply of the communalists among the Muslims. At a general meeting of the Punjab Provincial Muslim League held at Lahore on 1 May, 1927, Sir Mohamed Shaffi expressed his belief that until the mentality of the Hindu Mahasabha underwent the necessary change and effective guarantee of the protection of the Muslim vital interest was forthcoming, his community would continue to insist on the

107. See the confidential, demi-official letter from J.M. Dunnnett, Home Secretary to the Government of India, dated Lahore, February 1925; *Kohat Riots*, n. 64, p. 76.

108. P.C. Bamford, n. 32, p. 206

109. *Indian Quarterly Register*, January- June 1927, I, p. 419.

Lucknow agreements as an integral part of the Indian Consitution.<sup>110</sup> Even earlier in his letter written to Gandhiji on 4 March, 1927 Maulana Shaukat Ali confessed that the Muslims did not want to hear anything. They wanted him to organize them in the defence of Islam against the Hindus.<sup>110</sup> The misuse of the worst passions by middle class intellectuals had created an atmosphere which was dangerous to rational politics. Not only those who could not be absorbed in government jobs with limited scope, but also the others in mere sympathy for their frustrated compatriots, began to take keen interest in producing communal tension by provoking the masses on communal questions. One such cause of communal friction used to be the Cow-Killing. While the 'Hindus launched cow protection movement the Muslims decried against in. A neutralist abserver had, however, different views. On the cow protection movement in a letter from Switzerland in December 1926 addressed to Devdas Gandhi, Nehru says, "I wish the Cow Conference (which met under Mahatma Gandhi at the time of Belgaum Congress) or the Cow Sabha, or whatever it is called, would send a deputation to look at the cow in this part of the world. It would do them good. And they might get some brighter ideas than keeping enormous *pinjra-poles* for the halt and the lame. I have been greatly interested in the day by day controversy in *Young India*. I wish, however, that some other animals—including human beings might be treated likewise<sup>111</sup>.

Nehru's attempts even in those days to interest his countrymen particularly the Congress and its leaders to take a wider view of the Indian independence struggle and relate it to other events around the world, are brought out in a series of letters.<sup>112</sup>

110. *Ibid*, p. 431. For further study of the problem see B. R. Ambedkar, *Pakistan* (Bombay, 1945), pp. 296-98.

111. Letter deposited in the *Gandhi Smarak Nidhi*.

112. "Another Treasure from Nehru Archives", *National Herald*, 9 June 1972, p. 4, col. 4 and *Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru*, n. 52, p. 253.

Other national leaders of the Congress also made efforts to settle the communal problem. It may not be out of context to recall here that C.R. Das was one of those few topmost national leaders who had possessed the vision to view the communal tangle in its correct perspective and the courage to put forward a solution which others, knowingly or unknowingly, neglected. On the initiative of Deshbandhu a conference of the Swaraj Party was called at Calcutta in December 1923. The main purpose of the meeting was to discuss the subject regarding the preparation to a pact between the Hindus and Muslims. This was intended to give due recognition to the interests of both communities and thereby eradicate, once for all, future differences and misunderstanding between the rival communities in Bengal. The meeting dealt, besides other issues, with the problem of representation on local bodies, proportion of appointment in the public services and cow-killing. The noteworthy resolution passed at the Conference was as follows:

It is resolved that in order to establish real foundation of Self-Government in this province it is necessary to bring about a pact between the Hindus and Mohamedans of Bengal dealing with the rights of each community when the foundation of Self Government is secured. Be it resolved that:

- (a) Representation in the Bengal Legislative Council on the population basis with separate electorate subject to such adjustment as may be necessary by the All-India Hindu-Muslim Pact and by the Khilafat and the Congress.
- (b) Representation to local bodies to be in the proportion of 60 to 40 in every district—60 to the community which is in the majority and 40 to the minority. Thus in a district where the Mohamedans are in majority they will get 60 per cent and the Hindus 40 per cent. Similarly where the Hindus are in

majority they are to get 60 per cent and the Mohamedans 40 per cent. The question as to whether there should be separate or mixed electorates is postponed for the present to ascertain the views of both communities.

- (c) 55 per cent of the Government posts should go to Mohamedans to be worked out in the following manner: Fixing of tests of different classes of appointments. The Mohamedans satisfying the least test should be preferred till the above percentage is attained, and after that according to the proportion of 55 to 45, the former to the Mohamedans and the latter to the non-Mohamedans, subject to this that for the intervening years a small percentage of posts, say 20 per cent, should go to the Hindus.
- (d) (1) In not allowing any resolution or enactment which affects the religion of any of the different communities without the consent of 75 per cent of the elected members of that community.
- (2) In not allowing music in processions before any mosque.
- (3) In not interfering with cow-killing for religious sacrifices.
- (4) In providing that no legislation or enactment in respect of cow-killing for food will be taken up in the Council, but endeavour should be made by members of both the communities outside the Council to bring about an understanding between the communities.

- (5) In providing that cow-killing should be carried on in such a manner as not to wound the religious feelings of Hindus.
- (6) In providing for the formation every year of representative committees in every sub-division, of which half the members should be Mohamedans and half Hindus, each committee choosing its president from among themselves with power to arbitrate upon any dispute between the Hindus and Mohamedans in accordance with provision hereinbefore stated.<sup>113</sup>

As is evident from the pact, Das immediately saw that the problem was an economic one. "He realized that till the Mussalmans", writes Maulana Azad "were given the necessary assurances for their economic future, they could not be expected to join the Congress whole-heartedly. He, therefore, made a declaration which impressed not only Bengal but the whole of India." <sup>114</sup>

The pact initiated by C.R. Das led, however, to the creation of considerable opposition from the Hindu upper classes of Bengal, who considered that Das had sold himself to the Muslims in order to establish his majority in Council—which he actually did to defeat bureaucracy by setting up a strong opposition in alliance with the independent Muslim members resulting from the signing of this pact with them. In reply to this criticism Das announced that the Pact was provisional and was subject to confirmation at the Cocanada Congress.

In the meantime the Hindu-Muslim Unity Committee appointed at Delhi, like Deshbandhu Das in Bengal, composed a draft of National and Bengal Pacts.

113. Full text published by the *Amrit Bazar Patrika*, 24 December 1923.

114. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, *India Wins Freedom* (Orient Longmans, 1957), pp. 20-1.



At the Cocanada Congress C.R. Das considered it proper to initiate a discussion on the Indian and Bengal National Pacts. There arose some misapprehension in the minds of national leaders about the scope and real nature of these two pacts. Irrespective of the fact that Das was generally careful of the arising of any slightest misgiving that might hinder the progress of national liberation struggle and would thus indirectly strengthen the Imperialistic forces, the other national leaders did not take the issue in the same light. Being apprehended of the fact that discussion of this subject would create a good deal of friction in the Congress which anyhow had brought about a compromise between the No-Changers and Pro-Changers, the discussion on the issue was avoided by resolving to appoint a sub-committee to call for further opinions and criticisms and submit reports by 31 March 1924 to the All-India Congress Committee for its consideration. This was more than enough to indicate the mood of the other Congress leaders who were actually not interested in the approval of the Bengal Pact. Moreover, the newly appointed sub-committee was headed by Lala Lajpat Rai and Dr. Ansari. Both these leaders differed so sharply on the fundamentals of the National Pact that it was rather next to impossible to expect from them the drawing of the pact. And it was known beforehand that it would never be done. Conservative sections on both sides were largely responsible for the failure of the National Pact.

The estrangement of the Muslim leadership from the main current of nationalism after the abolition of Khilafat by Kamal Ataturk and entanglement of some the Muslim leaders by communal riots and problems, gave an opportunity to the orthodox and privileged Hindus within the Congress to criticize and oppose the move. Particularly those who were against Swarajists, wrongly felt that the Pact was to blackmail the movement towards the ideal of Swaraj. The Anti-Pact Group loudly proclaimed that the concept of Hindu-Muslim unity as envisaged in the Pact, had bred disaffection, faithlessness

and ill-will which were nowhere before the formation of the Pact. The idea of a Pact sounded to the opposers as nothing more than a "contract"

Further set-back to the developments in this direction, came with the premature death of C.R. Das who was confident to allay gradually the fears of orthodox Hindus within the Congress. Had he remained alive for longer time, the probability is not ruled out that he would have ultimately succeeded in his mission. And the signing of the pact would have paved the way for the germination of such a composite nationality which would have been genuinely believing that communal harmony and national happiness could be achieved only through adjustments and compromises. It did not matter at all if a little bit was to be parted with for the common prosperity. This however, did not take place. Soon after the death of C.R. Das, his Bengal declaration was repudiated and assailed even by some of his followers. "The result was that the Muslims of Bengal," writes Azad, "moved away from the Congress and the first seeds of partition were sown."<sup>115</sup> The committing of such blunders left the nationalist Muslim within the Congress in a very lurking position, who did so at great individual sacrifice, never hoping—isolated as they became from the bulk of their co-religionists—to be fully effective politically. This is the impression one gets from reading an autobiography like Maulana Azad's *India Wins Freedom*.

### **Social Prejudice**

There also existed certain social prejudices between the two communities, which were comfortably used for creating communal troubles. There prevailed an unhappy jealousy with which either side looked upon any reform to be introduced by the either in its social set-up. Rightly or wrongly it was believed that ultimate impact of such reform would culminate in increasing the power of the opposite group, to be exploited in resist-

<sup>115</sup>. Ibid., p.21.

ing the other. In his memoirs Swami Shraddhanāṇḍ relates a curious incident which well exemplified this retrogressive approach. According to his account Mr Ranade often used to attend the session of the National Social Conference to guide its deliberations. It was from the very beginning a Hindu conference, but Mr. Ranade wanted to unite Hindus and Muslims in all spheres of life. The only Muslim delegate who joined the Indian National Social Conference was a Mufti from Bareilly.

At the opening of the Conference when a resolution in favour of the remarriage of child-widows was moved by a Hindu delegate and seconded by the author, the Mufti asked permission to speak. The President (the late Rai Baijnath) told Mufti that as the resolution concerned Hindus only, he need not speak. At this the Mufti flared up "*tab iska nam Naishanel kyun rakkha hai*"? (why its name has been kept as National Conference). There was no loophole left for the President, and the Mufti was permitted to have his say. Mufti's argument was that the Hindu *Shastras* did not allow remarriage, it was a sin to press for it. Again when the resolution about the conversion of those who had become Christians and Muslims came up, the Mufti urged that when a man became an apostate and abandoned the Hindu religion, he ought not to be allowed to come back and contaminate the sacred Hindu society. On hearing this Mr. Ranade and other Hindu leaders were non-plussed while Mufti Saheb must have been laughing in his sleeves.<sup>116</sup>

It would not be out of place to quote another example defining the Muslim attitude towards the question of untouchability. It was alleged in certain sections that the Muslims had always been looking upon the *Shudra* classes with a desire and much of the hostility between the two religious communities grew out of the apprehension of the Muslims that Hindus might become more powerful by the assimilation of the neglected lower untouchable classes and castes. In 1909 some of the

116. Swami Shraddhanand, n.2, pp.32-3.

Muslims openly suggested that the untouchables should not be regarded in the ensuing census in 1911 as Hindus.<sup>117</sup> In the annual session of the Indian National Congress held at Coconada in 1923 Maulana Mohamed Ali further crossed the position taken by the Muslims in 1909. In his presidential address he stated:

There is one question which can easily furnish a ground for complaint of unfriendly action if communal activities are not amicably adjusted. It is the question of the conversion of the suppressed classes, if Hindu society does not speedily absorb them. The Christian missionary is already busy and no one quarrels with them. But the moment some Muslim missionary society is organized for the same purpose there is every likelihood of an outcry in the Hindu press. It has been suggested to me by an influential and wealthy gentleman who is able to organize a missionary society on the large scale for the conversion of the suppressed classes, that it should be possible to reach a settlement with leading Hindu gentlemen and divide the country into separate areas where Hindu and Muslim missionaries could respectively work, each community preparing for each year, or longer unit of time if necessary, an estimate of the numbers it is prepared to absorb or convert....In this way each community would be free to do the work of absorption and conversion.<sup>118</sup>

There was also another feature of the problem, namely, the "preparations"<sup>119</sup> which both the communities were making against each other without stopping. It could profitably be compared with a race for the possession of destructive

117. Ambedkar, n. 110, p. 235.

118. *Congress Presidential Addresses* (Madras, G.A. Natesan & Co., 1934), p. 700.

119. For further study see the statement by M.A.N. Hydari; K.P. Karunakaran, ed. by *Modern Indian Political Tradition* (New Delhi, 1962), pp. 218-20.

weapons going on between the two major Power blocs in the world today. If the Muslim had a Aligarh University, the Hindus must have a Banāras University. The race in the sphere of socio-cultural organization and equipment was guided by the determination and fear characteristic of the armed countries engaged in the preparation of vanquishing each other at the earliest available opportunity. Muslims were afraid that Hindus were fully preparing to enslave them and *vice-versa*. The Hindus displayed their apprehension of their being reconquered by the Muslims. Each was closely watching the "preparations" of its counterpart. Such a state of affairs could never be congenial for the growth of an 'unprejudiced solidarity. It was a dangerous and harmful circle.<sup>120</sup>

There was still another feature which tended to spoil the Hindu-Muslim relationship. There existed some sort of social segregation between them, though not so acute as in the case of the untouchables. Broadly speaking, the social segregation between the two groups differed only in some degrees than that extended to the untouchables. Both in cities and villages the two groups tended to live apart from each other. During working hours Hindus and Muslims mingled on the roads, in the offices and factories, but in the evening both of them returned to their respective residential areas and felt comfortable by being with the people of the same religion and customs. Maulana Mohamed Ali once gave an interesting though sarcastic description of the differences of social customs between the two communities.<sup>121</sup> In reply to the criticism levelled against it

120. Ambedkar, n. 110, pp. 236 & 238.

121. In his presidential address at Cocanada in 1923, he referred exaggeratedly to this social contrast like this:

The worst that could be said of a Muslim was that he had a tasteless mess which he called a dish fit for kings and wanted all to share with him, thrusting it down the throat of such as did not

(footnote cont.)

for practising a racial segregation against the Indians both in offices and residential quarters, the alien bureaucracy was quick enough to point out its finger towards the same thing practised both by Hindus and Muslims against each other.

Originally when the Muslims came to India they were only a few thousands. After the establishment of their political hegemony, and in order to perpetuate it they established missionary societies which worked for converting the indigenous people to Islam. On the other hand, among the Hindus there were a large number of people who were socially and religiously oppressed by the privileged castes and classes. They were obviously attracted by the Muslim missionaries. With a desire to enhance their social and religious status and to attain equality with the privileged Hindu castes and classes they thought it better to convert themselves. On the occasion of their conversion they were promised and got too, equal power and position in the Muslim socio-political set-up. But they could not attain status the of social equality with the Hindu privileged classes, especially the Brahmins who were very orthodox and uncompromising and considered themselves superior in social status. However, the number of the newly converted people went on increasing and very soon they became a major part of the entire Muslim community. With the eclipse of Muslim political power as well as with the passage of time it became difficult for the privileged classes among the Hindus to distinguish between the converted Muslims and the direct descendants of the original invaders and immigrants. Hence they started practising the social segregation

(previous footnote cont.)

relish it and would rather not have it, while his Hindu brother who prided himself on his cookery, retired into the privacy of his kitchen and greedily devoured all that he had cooked, without permitting even the shadow of his brother to fall on his food, or sparing even a crumb for him.

[Afzal Iqbal, ed., *Selected Writings and Speeches of Mohamed Ali* [Lahore, 1944] p. 308].

against all the classes and castes among Muslims. Secondly, the destruction and desecration of temples by the early Muslim invaders also created social prejudices in the minds of the Hindus. The dangerously educated orthodox priestly classes among Hindus exploited the ignorant Hindu masses badly on this point. On the other hand, the conservative *Maulavis* and *Mullahs* also did not lag behind in exploiting the sentiments of ignorant Muslim masses.

With the growth of the powerful nationalist movement when it began to appear that the alien rule would disappear and the political power would be transferred to Indians, there began to grow an apprehension in the minds of the Muslims, especially the converted ones that the British rule would be substituted by the Hindu rule because Hindus were larger in number. With the establishment of Hindu predominance the Muslims, especially the converted ones, would again continue to be oppressed by the Hindu privileged classes. Apprehended thus it were mainly the converted Muslims and not those whose ancestors came from outside, who began to demand the creation of a separate state out of Indian peninsula. Most prominent among the former were Mohammed Ali Jinnah and Mohammed Iqbal. Among the latter who deprecated the idea of division and worked for a cohesive nationalism most prominent were the Khan Brothers of N.W.F.P.

Continuing the study of social segregation, there prevailed a sort of repugnance to inter-dining and inter-marriage between the two groups despite their living together in the same country and under a common law and administration for centuries. The remarkable step of inter-marriage taken by Akbar, was practically abandoned after his death. In the post-war period during the days of demonstrations against the Rowlatt Act and the launching of the Non-Co-operation Movement in 1920 there existed perhaps an unparalleled opportunity when some concrete steps could be taken to eradicate the prevailing social segregation among the Hindus and Muslims.

In the struggle against the common adversary the common contacts between the people of two communities had multiplied and the socio-religious strain was lessened. On such a remarkably favourable occasion the national leadership, composed of both Hindus and Muslims, should have taken the drastic initiative of popularising the inter-dining and inter-marriages at least among the advanced classes, if not the common people who would have followed gradually, of these two groups. But the national leadership lacked that courage. It was afraid of the reverse consequences. Even Mahatma Gandhi, the greatest apostle of Hindu-Muslim unity, was radically opposed to inter-dining and inter-marriages between Hindus and Muslims. In reply to an interview of Mr. Edmund Candler, the Publicity Officer in Punjab Government, on 25 February 1920, Mahatma Gandhi stated :

Is it necessary for Hindu-Mahomedan unity that there should be inter-dining and inter-marrying?... In my opinion the idea that inter-dining or inter-marrying is necessary for national growth is a superstition borrowed from the West....I hold strong view on religion and marriage. The greater the restraint we exercise with regard to our appetites, whether about eating or marrying, the better we become from a religious standpoint....For years I have taken nothing but fruit in Mahomedan or Christian households. ....The fact is that inter-marriage and inter-dining are not necessary factors in friendship and unity though they are often emblems thereof. But insistence on either the one or the other can easily become and is today a bar to Hindu-Mahomedan unity. If we make ourselves believe that Hindus and Mahomedans cannot be one unless they inter-dine or inter-marry, we could be creating an artificial barrier between us which it might be almost impossible to remove. And it would seriously interfere with the growing unity between Hindus and Mahomedans. If, for example, Mahomedan youths consider it lawful to court Hindu girls, the Hindu parents will not, even if they suspected any such



thing, freely admit Mahomedans to their homes as they have begun to do now.<sup>122</sup>

Despite being in favour of these restrictions Gandhiji was still, strangely enough, insisting on both Hindus and Muslims to have a common purpose, a common goal and common sorrows.<sup>123</sup> Gandhiji, however, continued to adhere to these restrictions for years to come. This is evident from his another reply to a proposal of an inter-communal international dining for means of promoting goodwill amongst all classes, put forward by a correspondent, on 30 April 1925. He replied, "Such a dinner will no more bring the two communities together than the absence of it keeps them apart....I, therefore, rule out inter-dining as the means of promoting goodwill....Insistence upon inter-dining, as part of the programme of promotion of fellowship in my opinion, retards the growth of goodwill by raising false issues and even false hopes. ..These self-imposed restrictions have...a spiritual value." <sup>124</sup> This sort of defensive purity had debilitated the Hindus at its best and rotted them at its worst.

There can be revealed still another instance of social segregation between Hindus and Muslims. In a statement submitted to the Special Magistrate at Kohat, on behalf of the Secretary, Kohat Refugees Association at Rawalpindi, it was stated that since the termination of the Khilafat Movement the relation of the Hindus and Muslims had not been very friendly and the Muslims of Kohat were displeased with Hindus as the latter had not illuminated their houses and shops in celebration of the victory of Mustafa Kamal Ata Turk over the Greeks which the Muslims had celebrated with great eclat, having lighted big bonfires on the top of the neighbouring hills in order to proclaim the victory to the independent tribes living on the other side of those hills.<sup>125</sup>

122. M.K. Gandhi, "Hindu Mohamedan Unity", *Indian Review* (Madras, 1920) Vol. XXI, pp. 178-79.

123. *Ibid.*

124. Mahatma Gandhi, n. 40, pp. 63-4.

125. *Kohat Riots 1924* (Appendices), n. 64, p. 21.

**Interpretation of Ancestry**

An interesting and valuable study of Hindu-Muslim problem had been made a few years ago by late Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia. He held that the force that separated the two communities most was a particular view of history. Groups and communities were brought into existence primarily through the view they held of what had happened. Both Hindus and Muslims held different views of their common history. Such Hindus were rather very few as would recognize a Muslim ruler or man of significance as their ancestor. Similarly, a Muslim who acknowledged his ancestor in a Hindu was rare. Of course, a certain number of persons had not been lacking who with an erroneous thinking, had in their search for national unity, lumped together all Muslim rulers and conquerors on the register of Hindu ancestry. Such a smooth operation was of no utility. On the other hand, the Muslims who acknowledged invaders and massacrers as the ancestors were unworthy of freedom and their self-pride was false, because they had no continuing identity that they could maintain. There would have been no communal problem if both the religious communities had been able to interpret their history unitedly.<sup>126</sup> In its absence thus both of them appeared to become self-centred. Psychologically it became impossible for them to coalesce and fuse together into one common nationhood.

A disastrous result of this erroneous psychological lacuna was the misinterpretation of the Ali Brothers' speeches on the popularly rumoured invasion of India by King Amanullah of Afghanistan. The world knows King Amanullah very well not only as an arch-enemy of British Imperialism but also as a progressive modernizer of Afghanistan. In fact, in certain progressive circles he was lovingly nicknamed a "Socialist Monarch". In the later period of twenties when he visited India on way to his European tour, he did not conceal his antipathy

126. Ram Manohar Lohia, n. 85, pp. 12-5.

towards the British rule in India. He openly and fearlessly supported the Indian National Movement. At various largely attended meetings, he pleaded for Hindu-Muslim unity and expressed his affection and admiration for the people of India. While visiting the capitals of various European countries including the Soviet Union, he did not hesitate to deliver anti-British harangues wherever and whenever he got a suitable opportunity.<sup>127</sup> Besides he had also sheltered in his kingdom all the Indian revolutionary elements, who were secretly preparing to overthrow British Imperialism. There was nothing wrong if keeping this background of Amanullah in view Maulana Shaukat Ali stated on 13 May 1921 in a public meeting at Marehra in the then United Provinces :

We want to spread the ideas of freedom in India and to extirpate the Government for her; and we think that when the Amir of Kabul invades India, it would be a sin for a Muslim to help the Government and likewise it would be a sin for a Hindu to cross in a boat in which this sinful Government has taken its seat. A person who crosses a river in the company of a sinful man is also drowned.<sup>128</sup>

The orthodox reactionary Hindu circles in India, however, raised a hue and cry over such remarks of the Ali Brothers. They left no stone unturned to tarnish the image of Amanullah as an invader, aggressor and looter like the former Muslim invader Mahmood Ghaznavi. Their behaviour was as disastrous to the cause of Indian independence and Hindu-Muslim unity as that of orthodox *Mullahs* and *Maulvis* of Afghanistan who engaged themselves in hatching all sorts of intrigues and spreading unbelievable rumours at the conni-

127, Louis Fischer, *The Soviets in World Affairs: A history of the relation between the Soviet Union and the rest of the world* (Princeton, 1951), Vol. I, pp. 785-94.

128. Home (Pol.) Dept, Govt, of India, File No. 14/1921, p. 22.

vance of the notorious British spy "Lawrence of Arabia", to discredit and denounce King Amanullah as *Kafir*. We do not require a Sherlock Holmes to disclose to us that how the reactionary Muslim priests intrigued to distribute and circulate among the rural and illiterate masses the curious pictures of Afghan Queen Souriyah in European evening dress or some 'neglige'—to show how improperly she used to dress herself. Moreover, Lawrence is alleged to have also assisted the orthodox Afghan priests in circulating thousands of pamphlets and photographs of Amanullah dancing hand in hand with Larissa, the wife of Russian Ambassador in Kabul. This could be quite a provocative material for the backward tribal people who, what to talk of dancing with woman in public, did not tolerate to see woman in the streets without *burka* (veil).

Thus the presence of Lawrence in Afghanistan would have certainly added fuel to the fire of reactionary *Mullahs* and *Maulvis* against the radical movements of King Amanullah. In the words of Badshah Khan, "by the time the nine issues of the *Pakhtun Fagh* were out, the British, with the help of the *Mullahs*, divines and priests, created disturbances in Afghanistan. They declared King Amanullah a *Kafir* and forced him to leave his beloved land."<sup>129</sup>

It will, therefore, not be an exaggeration to say that the reactionary Hindu priestly classes as well as their counterparts in Afghanistan danced to the tune of British Imperialism in order to overthrow an Afghan King who could be of much use to India. Besides, they also jeopardized the cause of Hindu-Muslim unity.

### **Clash of Individualities**

If the Calcutta Session of the Congress in 1920 was a turning point in the movement for national independence and

129. Cited by D.G. Tendulkar, *Abdul Ghaffar Khan: Faith is a Battle* (Bombay, 1967), p. 55.

strengthened the forces of nationalism, it also provided impetus to those retrogressive forces which were gradually paving the way for the subsequent division of India. Jinnah ceased to associate himself actively with the Congress from then onwards. His utterance of a word "Mr" for Gandhiji created the crisis. To many people it appears that a tactful handling of the crisis would have perhaps avoided the catastrophe. But both the sides underestimated the importance of each other. Like other Moderate leaders Jinnah committed the mistake of underestimating or misconstruing the significance of the emotions of the delegates. Majority of the latter were from among the common mass of people and they had very much reverence for a man who had radicalized the political life of the country and with whom they felt more homely than with the former Congress leaders, due to their susceptibility to the impact of *Awtars* (incarnations of God) priests and saints, *peers* and *pagambars*. Thus for manifold reasons Gandhiji had come to be regarded by the mass of the people as a "Mahatma". On the other hand, for a long time, Jinnah could not reconcile with the idea of mass movement. He was one of those who were in favour of adoption of strictly constitutional means. However, this approach was out of tune with the spirit of the time. Still Jinnah continued to believe that the organization of a political movement was the prerogative of highly educated upper classes. So he felt completely out of his element in the khadi-clad people demanding speeches in vernacular languages. The enthusiasm of the "people outside struck him as mob hysteria and there was much difference between him and the Indian masses as between Saville Row or Bond Street and the Indian village with its mud-huts".<sup>130</sup> So long as he continued to adhere to this principle, he remained an isolated figure in the national struggle. But ultimately he had to compromise with the sentiment of the masses. To win the mass support for the creation of Pakistan he has also sometimes to discard his European dress. To

130. Jawharlal Nehru, *An Autobiography* (London, 1936), pp. 67-8.

appear as a mass leader before the protagonists of a separate-nation idea he had started putting on the attire of black Muslim cap, black *sherwani* and *silwar*, a symbol of the so-called respectable and sincere Muslim. But this very movement was against the nature and necessity of having a single, consolidated and indivisible nationalism.

On the other hand, the nationalist leaders and delegates present at the session undermined the importance of the role the individual emotions and sentiments do play in the growth of any movement. During the course of his speech at the same session when Jinnah addressed the Mahatma as "Mr. Gandhi", he was shouted down by thousands of the delegates and people who insisted that he should address him as "Mahatma Gandhi".<sup>119</sup> At the insistence of both the sides there followed a pandemonium. Both the sides felt that their emotions had been humiliated. At this critical juncture if the national leaders like Gandhiji and others had intervened and pacified the ruffled feelings of people by making them understand that they could not force a person from using any word, so long as it was not unparliamentary, perhaps it might have compensated for the emotional humiliation suffered by Jinnah in such a vast gathering. But no such attempt was made. This insult to his individuality perhaps added more fury to his already existing antagonism for the organization of the Non-Co-operation Movement and the use of the term "Mahatma Gandhi". He was so much affected emotionally that after this incident he never perhaps addressed Gandhiji as Mahatma. Though the Calcutta episode was a minor incident, however, it appeared to have been an important factor in alienating Jinnah's active co-operation with the nationalist movement for more than a decade to come, and later on taking him completely away with new religio-political developments.

119. *1921 Movement : Reminiscences* (Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Govt. of India, 1971), pp. 143 & 176.

It would, however, be naive to conclude that by the departure of Mr. Jinnah nationalism did not suffer any loss. Actually it did, as the subsequent events convincingly proved. It was actually tragic that the services of a man who was often hailed as the "Ambassador of Hindu-Muslim Unity",<sup>132</sup> being only a statutory Muslim with none of the religious orthodoxies, in whose honour famous People's Jinnah Memorial Hall was built in Bombay which survived even the fanaticism of partition in 1947, one of the most courageous champion of Indian freedom, a staunch Congressman and an avowed opponent of separate electorate before his departure from the Congress,<sup>133</sup> were not utilized for the cause of nationalism. His unwillingness to play a second fiddle in the movement as he felt prejudiced against Gandhiji's leadership made the situation worse confounded. Although it is true that being a man of outstanding merit, he could not remain a back-bencher, yet he should have sacrificed personal egoism in the broader interest of nationalism. Because he could not do it, his coming to the front rank of politics synchronized with desecularization of nationalism. Since his going to the other side he began to play the game of wits in politics. Thanks to his shrewdness, he won an approbrium of a henchman of imperialism. On the other hand, the indifference of the national leadership to accommodate him as it had done in the case of Liberals who had bitterly and publicly opposed the Non-Co-operation and Civil Disobedience movements—led to further drawback in the growth of nationalism. Personal egoism perhaps could not stand it.

The superiority inhibition between Gandhiji and Jinnah developed to such an extent in the later years that to invite

132. Sarojini Naidu, *Mohamed Ali Jinnah, An Ambassador of Unity: His Speeches and Writings, 1912-1917* (Madras, 1918), p.7.

133. For detailed study on his nationalist background see Kailash Chandra, *Tragedy of Jinnah* (Lahore, 1941), p. 36; Ambedkar, n. 110, pp. 308-12; M. H. Saiyid, *Mohammed Ali Jinnah* (Lahore, 1945), pp. 174-91; Sarojini Naidu, *Mohammed Ali Jinnah ; An Ambassador of Unity* (Bombay, 1926), p. 11; A. A. Ravoof, *Meet Mr. Jinnah* (Madras, 1944), p. 53 and Karunakaran, n. 119, pp. 238-57.

one by the other for negotiations became a matter of prestige. Diwan Chaman Lal attempted to get the two leaders together in 1940 when both of them had gone to Simla to meet the Viceroy. Diwan Chaman Lal first went to Jinnah who appreciated the suggestion but simultaneously said, "Please do not tell Gandhi that I want to see him." After the meeting both Goswami and Diwan Chaman Lal went to Gandhiji who on seeing them enquired immediately whether they were coming to him as messengers from Jinnah. On being told that both of them knew Jinnah intimately and what better messengers could he have than both of them he suddenly asked, "Does Jinnah want to see me?" Diwan Dhaman Lal replied, "I can't say that he does, but we are most anxious that you two should meet." In reply Gandhiji said, "If I were to say that I want to meet Jinnah it should be a lie; but if Jinnah wanted to meet me, I am prepared to walk from here to the Cecil Hotel barefoot."<sup>134</sup> Unfortunately, the project of meeting did not come off, neither of them met and history took a different turn doing an irreparable damage to nationalism.

It is difficult to produce any documentary proof for such apathetic attitude of the Congress leadership towards Jinnah. Even when Jinnah had become active in the Muslim League politics which was not at least anti-thesis of the nationalist interests till its division in 1927-28, the Congress continued to regard Jinnah as an insignificant person. It attached more importance to the Ali Brothers and others who, after the close of the Khilafat question, began to think more and more about Muslim, rather than the national interests. On the other hand, Jinnah had, on innumerable occasions, given his tacit consent to the foregoing of the interests of his own community, sometimes at cost of displeasing many of his close colleagues in the Muslim politics. Nevertheless, strange political developments were perhaps more than enough in alienating his sympathies from

<sup>134</sup>. *Talking of Gandhiji*, Four programmes for Radio first broadcast by B.B.C. (Orient Longmans, 1957), p. 13.



Indian nationalism. It was perhaps due to this uncompromising attitude and intransigence of Hindu national leadership that turned Indian Jinnah into Muslim Jinnah.

Very few at that time could foresee that this ignored person was to play a historical role in moulding the destiny of the country. By the time the national leadership displayed its willingness to negotiate with him, he had undergone a radical transformation of his political views, supported in their adherence by a powerful alien bureaucracy. If Sir Syed only alienated<sup>135</sup> the Muslims from the ideals of national reconstruction, Mohamed Ali Jinnah carved out a new state out of the main national edifice. The objective of the English rulers had been fulfilled. Once an ardent and staunch supporter of nationalism had become its most implacable and dangerous opponent.

In sharp contrast to the activities of Jinnah was the career of Maulana Mohamed Ali. He gave the impression of acting more like a Muslim rather than a secularist or nationalist. Politics of non-co-operation became an instrument for him to attain the objects of his religion rather than bringing an assimilation between Hindus and Muslims. Like any other orthodox believer he did not appear to permit any latitude of thought in this connection. Ideologically his was a narrow and straight way and he was not to be flexible to any side. In a speech delivered in the All-India Khilafat Conference at Meerut on 9 April 1921 he stated categorically:

It is an unquestionable fact that we hold our religion dearest. Our actions, all of them, have a direct bearing on religion and take their origin in it. It is nothing else but a religious motive which would compel us—I mean the Mussalmans—to bring to their mind the long established principle, namely, the head of a Mussalman should never bow to any other (mortal).<sup>136</sup>

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135. For further study see Karunakaran, n. 119, pp. 216-18.

136. Home (Pol.) Department, Government of India, File No. 11/1921, p. 1.

Again in his Presidential Address at the Provincial Khilafat Conference, Broach (Gujarat) on 1 June 1921 he said:

Islam has to be preserved in the world as it cannot be separated from the world any more than a flower can be separated from the smell. It may become dry, but it cannot lose its inherent smell. If it loses its smell, then it becomes a useless flower. The Mussalmans all the world over have only one object in view.... I ask every one of you to answer clearly this one question: "Can he reasonably ask a man to renounce his faith for the sake of any consideration?"<sup>137</sup>

It was his religious inflexibility that led him to extol a Muslim however bad his character might be, as superior to even Gandhiji however clean his character.<sup>138</sup> It was also perhaps this communal inflexibility that led to the growth of his differences with Gandhiji over the Kohat riots.<sup>139</sup>

Unlike Mr. Jinnah, Maulana Mohamed Ali was the staunch supporter of the separate electorate. Without its preservation he could not visualize the growth and maintenance of the communal unity. In support of the doctrine implemented in 1909 Reforms Scheme he had stated in his presidential address delivered at the 1923 session of the Cocanada Congress:

Paradoxical as it may seem, the creation of separate electorates was hastening the advent of Hindu-Muslim unity. For the first time, a real franchise, however restricted, was being offered to Indians, and if Hindus and Mussalmans remained just as divided as they had hitherto been since the commencement of the British rule, and often hostile to one another, mixed electorates would have provided the best

137. Ibid, pp. 5-6.

138. Mahatma Gandhi, n. 40, p. 97.

139. For detailed study see Swami Shraddhanand, n. 2, pp. 124-26.

battle-ground for inter-communal strifes, and would have still further widened the gulf separating the two communities.... The creation of the separate electorates did a great deal to stop this inter-communal warfare.<sup>140</sup>

Like many other leaders the Maulana also talked of sacrificing his community interests whether others did so or not, yet the All-Parties Convention showed that he failed in the test miserably like many others.

With the growth of the bias and prejudice in his mind against the Muslims whose share was no less significant in its contribution, Swami Shraddhanand disclosed during those days certain facts about the Muslim participation in the Indian National Congress. Though these revelations might be containing a substantial element of truth, yet they proved in the long run very much detrimental to the advancement of nationalism. The sarcastic manner in which they were revealed, further alienated the Muslims from the national movement. Relating the Muslim participation in the Lucknow Session (1916) of the Congress he writes:

Sitting on the dais, the first thing that I noticed was that the number of Muslim delegates was proportionately fourfold of what it was at Lahore in 1893. The majority of Muslim delegates had donned gold, silver or silk embroidered *chogas* (flowing robes) over their ordinary coarse suits of wearing apparel. It was remoured that these *chogas* had been lent by Hindu moneyed man for Congress *tamasha*. Of some 433 Muslim delegates only some 30 had come from outside; the rest belonged to Lucknow city. And of these the majority were admitted free to delegates' seats, board and lodging. Sir Syed Ahmed's anti-Congress League had tried in a public meeting to dissuade Muslims from joi-

140. *Congress Presidential Addresses*, n. 118, pp. 621-22.

ning the Congress as delegates. As a counter-move the Congress people lighted whole Congress Camp some four nights before the session began and advertised that ingress for that night would be free. The result was that all the *Chandu Khanas* of Lucknow were emptied and a huge audience of some thirty thousand Hindus and Muslims was addressed from half a dozen platforms. It was there that the Muslim delegates were elected or selected. All this was admitted by the Lucknow Congress organizers to me in private.<sup>141</sup>

Besides, in the course of negotiations through successive Unity Conferences and All-Parties Conferences to adopt the Nehru Report the Hindu leadership tended to deal with the Muslims as the alien regime dealt with nationalist forces: they made concessions but it was frequently a case of too little and too late.

Even before the Nehru Committee was set up, some endeavours were made to prepare a *Swaraj* Constitution. On 23 January 1925 a meeting of the All Parties Conference Committee was held at Delhi. According to Sir Hari Singh Gour the "elephant of Hindu majority and the tiger of Moslem minority have been brought to the brink of a common pool."<sup>142</sup> The conference was attended by a large number of participants including Motilal Nehru, M. A. Jinnah, the Ali Brothers, Mrs. Besant, Shraddhanand, Rajendra Prasad, Jawaharlal Nehru, Lajpat Rai, H. N. Kunzru, C. Y. Chintamani, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad M. R. Jayakar and Ramaswamy Mudaliar, with Mahatma Gandhi as president. An encouraging debate took place on his suggestion to appoint a sub-committee to chalk out the terms of an agreement between Hindus and Muslims and among all the political groups and also to prepare a scheme of *Swaraj*.

141. Swami Shraddhanand, n. 2, pp. 30-2. Also see pp. 24-5.

142. Memorandum by Sir Hari Singh Gour submitted to the Sankaran Nair Commission (Bombay, 1925), pp. 245-46,

This Committee was divided into two sections—one to deal with the Hindu-Muslim problem and the other to lay down a preliminary scheme of *Swaraj* which should make India a self-governing dominion, free from interference, with domestic matters her own concern. On the Hindu-Muslim question, a heated discussion took place. Speakers representing special interests took a very prominent part in it and submitted their views with great shrewdness. There appeared to be very little prospect of success. “It appeared that appetite”, comments one of the participants, “had grown by what it had fed on.. .The whole seemed to me an unseemly selfish scramble for power and offices”.<sup>143</sup> The whole trouble lay in the fact that everybody talked loudly of sacrifice of personal or communal interests, but when the time to implement these declarations reached, no one would come forward. The ignorance of democratic socialism in the lower strata and abhorrence of the same by the upper class privileged persons in the two major communities appeared to block progress. The issue of *Swaraj* was dealt with from the proportionate benefits to each community, and to adjust themselves within the new frame-work “the Muslims struggled to disown all idea of Pan-Islamism and a Muslim corridor from Turkey to Asia Minor.”<sup>144</sup> The meeting terminated with a suppressed feeling of hostility all round.

Watching this failure in the progress of the Sub-Committee, Gandhiji remarked that it was impossible, in the prevailing conditions of suspicion, to formulate any scheme that could rightly be called a joint scheme. After a short discussion the Committee adjourned *sine die*.

After a few days an informal gathering of representatives of the various groups and communities met at the residence of Hakim Ajmal Khan in Delhi. It soon found that the real points

143. M.R. Jayakar, *The Story of my Life*, Vol. II, 1922-25 (Asia Publishing House, 1959), p. 435,

144. *Ib'd.* 536,

at issue would be best dealt with by Pt. Malaviya and Lajpat Rai on one side and Jinnah on the other, probably with Gandhiji "more as a hyphen than a vinculum",<sup>145</sup> But a fresh discussion of the problem revealed the reality that other leaders did not like the shrinkage of the Committee and its powers. It was at last decided to postpone the talks. The news led to many adverse comments.

The Sub-Committee met again in February, but to its disappointment it found that a solution of important problems between the two religious groups was not again probable, and the conference could do nothing but repeat the Lucknow Pact of 1916, i.e. to draw up a scheme not satisfactory to Hindu communalists for division of jobs and seats. Even before the commencement of the conference Sir Hari Singh Gour had commented that this "might result in a semblance of agreement, but would send the dragon's teeth from which the only harvest possible is the clash of arms."<sup>146</sup> The conference had subsequently to adjourn *sine die* again. The real atmosphere for compromise was lacking. At about this time a conflict between the Ali Brothers and Gandhiji was revealed to the people for the first time in *Young India* dated 26 March 1925.

When the announcement of the Statutory Commission to decide the future of Indian constitution was made (and no Indian representative was found to be on it) there was left no alternative for the nationalists except to take steps by themselves to frame their own future scheme of *Swaraj*. By a resolution passed at the Madras Session in 1927, the Congress invited all political parties in India to confer with its Working Committee to devise constitution for India based on common agreement.<sup>147</sup> To carry out these instructions the Congress

145. *Ibid.* See *India Quarterly Register*, January-June 1925, Vo I, p. 537.

146. Memorandum by Sir Hari Singh Gour, *The Report of the Sankaran Nair Commission* (Bombay, 1925), pp. 245-46.

147. *The Nehru Committee Report* (Allahabad, A.I.C.C., 1928), p. 19. See also Kanji Dwarkdas, *India's Fight For a Freedom* (Bombay, Popular Prakashan; 1966), p. 336.

Working Committee planned to convene the All-Parties Conference. The endeavour of these various political groups to find the highest common basis for a constitution for India was significant. Never before in the history of the national movement had so many organizations—political, labour, religious, communal and commercial—assembled together to determine for themselves what was good for them. In doing so they acted on the principle of self-determination.

Before the All-Parties Conference could meet in February 1928, a behind-the-door attempt was made to resolve the various differences towards the close of 1927. It is said that Rafi Ahmad Kidwai had nearly pulled off a Hindu-Muslim settlement on the basis of Joint Electorates and queered the pitch of the forthcoming Simon Commission. One winter evening in his Daryaganj *Serai* in Delhi, the Ali Brothers, and several leading Khilafatists and Jinnahite Muslims met for dinner and thrashed out the basis of Hindu-Muslim settlement in a future Constitution. It gave the Muslims a fair share in the governance of a future India—their natural political dominance in Bengal and Punjab provincial councils elected on adult suffrage, the separation of Sind from the Bombay Presidency so as to make Sind a Muslim majority province and the upgrading of the NWFP as another Muslim majority province of Pathans. The Muslims were to surrender their claim to separate electorates in favour of joint electorates in turn for these concessions. And both Hindu and Muslim majority provinces were to grant weightage in the representation of their respective minorities in the legislature in equal proportions.

This package deal was successfully sold to the Hindu leaders like Malaviya, Munje, Lajpat Rai and others at the first All-Parties Conference held in New Delhi in February 1928. The British too had temporarily laid off their game of 'divide and rule'. Lords Reading and Irwin in the private despatches to Whitehall were also keen on a Hindu-Muslim

settlement in India. Jinnah was still a semi-nationalist. The Ali Brothers had been successfully managed. The ball had been set rolling by the boarders in Rafi's caravan *serai* in Daryaganj.<sup>148</sup>

The Congress leaders failed to take the communal bull by the horns; the Delhi entente was sabotaged by Sind Congress leaders like Jairamdas Daulatram and Choithram Gidwani and the Sikhs in the Punjab. Malaviya wobbled and wriggled out of the agreement. And surprisingly enough Motilal Nehru so firm and determined on any stand he took in life bended too and the opportunity was lost. It is a tragedy that those who 'swallowed the camel of Pakistan' twenty years later were straining at this gnat then.<sup>149</sup>

### **Nehru Report**

Meanwhile the All-Parties Conference held in Bombay on 19 May 1928 appointed a sub-committee under the chairmanship of Pandit Motilal Nehru to determine the principles of a constitution for India and to prepare a report thereon. The Committee was directed to circulate its draft among the various organizations. It was further advised to give full consideration to the resolution of the Madras Congress on communal unity and similar resolutions passed by the other bodies like the Hindu Mahasabha, the Muslim League and other organizations represented at the All-Parties Conference held in Delhi in February-March 1928.

It may be recalled that the most thorny problem before the Nehru Committee was the minority problem. There were a number of difficulties in getting rid of this headache. In a letter written to Gandhiji on 28 June 1928 Dr. Ansari explained:

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148. 'Rafi-An, "Life and Times of Gadfly; Story of Rafi Ahmad Kidwai, *National Herald* (New Delhi) , 25 October 1972, p.5, cols. 5-6.

149, Ibid.



When I reached Allahabad there was a complete deadlock (in the Nehru Committee). The Sikhs would have no reservation of seats at all anywhere, neither for the majority nor for the minority. The (Hindu) Mahasabha people would allow reservation for the minorities, but none for the majorities. The Congress and Muslim proposal was for a reservation of seats both for the majorities and the minorities.<sup>150</sup>

After its submission the Nehru Report was discussed at a conference held in Lucknow on 29 August 1928. Formalities of thanking and congratulating the Nehru Committee were performed at this meeting.<sup>151</sup> A number of resolutions were passed. In a resolution the conference placed on record its agreement of all parties.<sup>152</sup> But the controversial discussions at the Conference remained inconclusive. The only Muslim organization which was officially represented at the Conference was the Central Khilafat Committee and that too did not approve of the recommendations.

The Calcutta Session held in 1928, where the Nehru Report was presented, is considered to be one of the most vital in the political history of the country, though the sessions held at Surat in 1907, at Lucknow in 1916, at Amritsar in 1919 and at Calcutta in 1920, constitute landmarks in the advance of the nationalist movement. While the Lucknow and Amritsar sessions had attained a certain standard of commercial and political solidarity that had hung in the balance in the times before the Surat and the Calcutta Special Session manifested the growth of a new life in the struggle for national emancipation. This significance of the 1928 session was the combination of

150. Cited by Kanji Dwarkadas, *India's Fight For Freedom* (Bombay, 1966), p. 337.

151. For further study see Kanji Dwarkadas, n. 150, pp. 337—39.

152. Full text of the resolutions were published in the *Indian Review* (Madras, 1928), Vol. XXIX, p. 649.

both these vital issues. The Calcutta session was momentous because a National Convention to bring the different political, commercial, communal and other parties and groups in India together was held.

The Convention met in Calcutta on 22 December under the chairmanship of Dr. Ansari to finalize the Nehru report. There was a large and representative gathering, which included presidents of the Congress and the Liberal Federation and leaders of various political opinions. There were about 1,600 delegates. In the words of a participant the convention was "a conglomeration of Freudian 'opposite factions' and cross-ideologies".<sup>153</sup>

On the closer study of the report submitted by Nehru Committee one appeared to agree with the observations made by the *New Statesman* (London) when the journal remarked that the report was an artificial plan, an abstract and mechanical structure, neither Indian nor workable. It was alleged to be a doctrinaire invention unrelated to the established facts of Indian life or government, an ill-conceived and hasty device, a paper scheme already disowned by every minority. According to the journal, it was "precisely a scrap of paper and nothing more."<sup>154</sup>

The weakest feature of the Nehru Report was that it contained all that appeared to satisfy the aspirations of the constitutional-minded and nationalist Hindus.<sup>155</sup> But had noth-

153. M. Tayyebulla, *Between the Symbol and the Idol at Last* (Allied Publishers, 1964), p. 74.

154. *New Statesman* (London), 15 June and 3 August 1929.

155. Recommending the acceptance of the Nehru Report, Gandhiji had written in *Young India* on 16 August 1928 on the eve of Lucknow meeting: "A tremendous step will have been taken in the direction of constitutional *Swaraj*—as distinguished from what might be termed organic *Swaraj*." [*Young India* 1927—28; a collection of writings (Madras, S. Ganesan, 1935), p. 796]

ing, neither complete independence nor separate electorates, to please the Muslims, not all of whom had so far expressed allegiance to the doctrine of nationalism. The majority of those who had joined the national movement did so partly because of the Lucknow Pact of 1916 which gave cognizance to their demand of separate electorates and partly because of the support extended by the National Congress to the Khilafat Movement. Once the Khilafat issue had become dead (and that had disillusioned almost all the Muslim participants) the only ray of hope for the Muslims to continue in the nationalist movement was separate electorates. Most of Muslims had begun to regard it as a law of the country and they claimed that they could not be deprived of that right without their consent. But it was to be snatched away from them by the Nehru Report.

Politics is a game of compromise, especially at a critical juncture. There still existed amidst the Hindus and Muslims a third party (an overwhelmingly powerful one) of aliens who manipulated and exploited the weakness of any situation created by the mutual mistrust of the two participants in the national movement. By ignoring the re-emergence of the traditional antagonism in the form of communal disturbance which had been temporarily overshadowed by the Non-Co-operation Movement launched by both the parties, the Congress leadership overestimated the significance of the Muslim participation in the Movement. Consequently they hastened to substitute separate electorates with joint electorates. However had they at least conceded the demand for complete independence, and ignored the inclusion of dominion status—which they did one year later in 1929 at Lahore Congress—perhaps the situation would have been saved. The politically conscious Muslims held the British rulers responsible for the collapse of Khilafat in Turkey. They were bitterly antagonistic to the continuation of British rule in India in any form and

consequently they cherished total independence. On this they appeared to be uncompromising.

But the constitutional-minded Hindu nationalists showed their immaturity by ignoring totally the interests of their erstwhile Muslim colleagues whose contribution to the national movement, by whatever conditions it might have been determined, was considerable. In the process of the attempt to take away political power from the aliens, they should have also kept their Muslim comrades in good humour. And that could be done only by conceding to the maintenance of the Lucknow Pact <sup>156</sup> intact so long as the mind of an average Muslim was not freed of the suspicion relating to Hindu dominance. There was not going to be inflicted any major substantial loss on the Hindus at least till complete independence was obtained by conceding this demand. And after independence there were so many ways to resolve the crisis. In no case it could remain unresolved.

Joint electorate was all right as a matter of principle, but politicians had to face facts. In order to fight the bureaucracy and other forces of British Imperialism the Indian leaders must have done something, at least for the time being, to unite the country even on communal basis. This was very much a necessity with a view to control the mischief-mongers clamouring for separate electorates and communal representation, irrespective of the fact that majority of such people belonged to the landed, commercial and intellectual or *bourgeois* classes who talked rather loudly but never moved even their little finger against the foreign autocracy in the cause of the country. It is also a fact that majority of such people, honourable exceptions apart, belonged to the class which hankered after

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156. Rationalizing the Lucknow Pact Jinnah had said in 1916: "The demand for separate electorates is not a matter of policy, but a matter of necessity to the Muslims who require to be roused from the coma and torpor into which they have fallen for so long." Kuldip Nayar, *Distant Neighbours*, p. 8.

titles, jobs and grants of land from the British Government and would sell their moral and physical prestige to please their masters for the proverbial mess of pottage.

By adhering dogmatically to the idea of secularism the Congress leaders appeared to behave like the Russian Left Socialist Revolutionaries who wanted to expunge the October Revolution by opposing the signing of Brest Litovsk Treaty. Lenin compared them with school children who did not understand the first principles of history. In his accusation he declared: "They do not realize that revolution is a difficult and complex science. For them it is merely a question of words; the histories of revolutions are full of these words-spinners; and what remains of them? Only smoke and a bad smell."

In arriving at the conclusion of joint electorate, the Hindu nationalists kept into consideration only the views of Muslim leaders like Dr. Ansari, Hakim Ajmal Khan, Maulana Azad and others. They did not give due weight to the views of Ali Brothers who were the elder leaders and appeared to enjoy the confidence of a larger number of their co-religionists. In fact, it would not be wrong to concede that the Brothers enjoyed the same popularity and prestige among the Muslims as Gandhi-ji did among the Hindus. Despite knowing this, the Congress leaders appeared to have committed a blunder—perhaps as serious as the one committed at the Special Calcutta Congress Session in 1920, when M.A. Jinnah was interrupted and heckled by the assembled delegates for not using saintly language for the topmost leaders of the Congress. During the course of discussion on the question of dominion status in the All-Parties Convention on 23 December 1928 when Maulana Mohamed Ali rose to speak and opposed the resolution by stating that deviation was the policy of cowards and not of fighters, tempers flared up. Mohamed Ali was interrupted and heckled, and howled down in a most outrageous manner. A prominent Bengal delegate even shouted emotionally at him "Ignore him",

without knowing that the Maulana was too great a personality to be ignored. The Maulana was asked to withdraw statements which he said he had not made. The Liberals too fished in the trouble waters. Sir C.P. Ramaswamy Iyer came to the platform on behalf of the Liberals and retorted to the Maulana :

I know this talk of killing and get killed a little too much. Let us be realists and face the facts. We may not be heroes, but if we are going to kill and get killed, then your place is not in this Convention but somewhere else.<sup>157</sup>

After him arose Sir C. Y. Chintamani and when he also spoke against the proposal of the Maulana for independence, the latter wanted to refute the allegations by raising a point of order. He was shouted at to sit down by the audience. On this the Maulana who was more emotional than Jinnah, retorted, "If the rabble is going on like this, I will go out." Unfortunately, instead of understanding his viewpoint he was charged by the audience, "you are also of the rabble."<sup>158</sup>

Such language was too strong for a leader who enjoyed the confidence of the largest number of the second largest community of India. The silence on the part of the Congress delegates which included the topmost leaders, Mahatma Gandhi, Motilal Nehru and Dr. Ansari (who presided over the Convention) and Srinivas Iyengar, showed that they were in agreement with the Liberals.<sup>159</sup> This was too much

157. *The Proceedings of the All—Parties National Convention held at Calcutta* (Allahabad, 1928), p. 53.

158. *Ibid.*

159. This sort of behaviour especially on the part of Gandhiji tarnished much of his image in the Muslim mind before partition. Alleging in a B.B.C. broadcast towards the end of 1956 a Pakistani leader said that his co-religionists looked upon him as a "very astute, clever lawyer and a very slippery customer" because he always used to evade coming down to realities when the interests of Muslims were concerned. [*Talking of Gandhiji* (Orient Longmans, 1957), pp. 12–13].

for the Ali Brothers. It was the signal for the parting of ways. Thereafter the Ali Brothers never returned to the Congress. They left the Congress as its bitter enemies. Straight from the Convention they left for Bihar and Orissa to preside over the Muslim All-Parties Conference. The British, on their side, restored their hereditary pension, the indignant Brothers used to get from the Nawab of Rampur. Other princely purses like those of the Nizam and the Nawab of Bhopal opened too for the Muslim campaigners against the Nehru Report.<sup>160</sup>

The Ali Brothers lost no time in forgetting that joint electorates were essential for the survival of Muslims of India. A mixed electorate alone could keep Hindu communalism at bay and the necessity for Hindu politicians to seek the substantial Muslim vote would thwart the use of fire-eating Hindu communalists.

In devising the schemes of dominion status the Congress leadership appeared to appease the Liberals (it could not have been otherwise with Liberal leaders like Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru having a major say in the drafting of the Report) whose influence on national politics was negligible in comparison to that of the Muslim leadership in the Congress over their people. Moreover, practically speaking, the Liberals had no prominent Muslim leader among them who could persuade his co-religionists in the direction of dominion status. Most of them were Hindus. The Congress leadership considered it proper to adopt the views of the Liberals and frame a constitution accordingly, rather than share the plans of the Muslim leaders—a necessity of practical politics. This doubt in the genuineness of the constitution-framers found expression in the speeches of Muslim leaders in course of time.<sup>161</sup> The Congress thus co-ope-

160. 'Rafi-An', 'Life and Times of a Gadfly: Story of Rafi Ahmed Kidwai', *National Herald* (New Delhi), 25 October 1972 p.6, col.4.

161. See the speech delivered by Maulana Mohamed Ali at the Muslim All-Parties Conference at Delhi on 31 December 1928, *The Indian Quarterly Register* (Calcutta), Vol. II, pp. 416—17. See also *Nehru's Works*, Vol. III, p. 202],

rated with those who not only non-co-operated with it at the critical juncture of the struggle for national emancipation but also made an alliance with its adversary by accepting various offices and gave all possible help in discrediting and suppressing the first mass movement of the nation. And when they failed in this attempt and lost the 1923 election in the Councils and Assembly, they were perhaps waiting for a proper opportunity to disrupt the forces of national reconstruction. They got it during the course of preparing the Nehru Report.

Despite it, the Congress was ready to compromise with the Liberals. In doing so the principal author of the Report appeared to have forgotten his own advice rendered to his son nearly 8 years before when he had written that any attempt to compromise with the Moderates was bound to result in "disaster".<sup>162</sup> Even the son had expressed grave doubts in 1927 on this strange unity of Liberals with the Congress. He felt very much worried over the overtures of the Liberals to influence Congress leaders.<sup>163</sup> Moreover, at the meeting of the A.I.C.C. in Delhi on 3 November 1928 Mr. Satyamurthy enquired when the Congress had sacrificed complete independence to dominion status for the sake of maintaining unity with the Liberals, did they make promise they would not try for offices in the Viceroy's Executive Council "Why all this hunt", he added, "after the *maricha* of unity with such people, thereby giving a wrong lead to the country? Dr. Besant had talked of England's protection of India. But go anywhere in the world, and there you would find England's name stinking in man's nostrils." Besides, this very Liberal leader, Annie Besant, was to denounce a year later the resolution on complete independence

162. Jawaharlal Nehru's *A Bunch of old Letters* (Asia Publishing House 1958), p. 6.

163. See the letter written by Jawaharlal Nehru to Virendra Chattopadhyaya on 11 December 1927: the full text of the letter appeared in *Link* (weekly) New Delhi, 19 July 1964. pp. 10-12.



as "muddle-headed diplomacy".<sup>164</sup> She had given no consideration to the fact that even the mildest submissions like dominion status of the Nehru Committee, were rejected by those very alien rulers with whom she wanted to keep the Indian people in dominion status. The Congress thus sided with those who, for some reason or other, considered it a greater sin against their creed to agree occasionally with their so-called extremist countrymen (Congressmen) than to agree, as a matter of settled habit, with the views of the foreign government.<sup>165</sup> The conservative section among these liberals generally used to charge that their programme was handicapped in execution by exaggerating considerations for the susceptibilities of the alien regime.

On the other hand, the Congress non-co-operated and displayed a determined reluctance to concede anything positive to those who had been its comrades-in-arms in its struggle against its adversary, though their interests were also being served by the same struggle. Among the Muslim leaders there prevailed an impression that it was the Muslims who made the National Congress a really effective organization by contributing to it both in men and money. Exaggerating this role in the course of his presidential address at the U. P. Muslim All-Parties Conference held at Cawnpore on 4 November 1928 Maulana Shaukat Ali had pointed out:

He was proud of the Muslim sacrifice and suffering of 1920 and 1921 which emancipated the Congress from a crawling situation and placed it on a glorious and successful career. Muslims contributed about 6 lakhs towards the National and Khilafat funds and went to jail in untold numbers. Many national papers...were subsidised out of

164, *Annie Besant: A collection of her writings* (Madras, Theosophical Publishing House, 1942), p. 92.

165. T. N. Jagadisan, ed., *Letters by V.S. Srinivasa Sastri* (Madras, Rouse & Sons, 1944), p. 240.

these funds. Everything was then thought out to be glorious.<sup>166</sup>

Under these circumstances the Congress adherence only to dominion status brought bitter disappointment to the Muslim ranks. Although the Congress Party veered round to the idea of complete independence one year afterwards, the Muslim leadership, spearheaded by the Ali Brothers and their colleagues, had already reconciled themselves to the idea that the Congress would never be able to meet their demands. The endorsement of the Nehru Report would culminate in nothing but jeopardizing their rights and, unless they did something, their claims would be lost by default. They also alleged that the claim of the framers of the Report was that it had been formulated to meet the challenge of Lord Birkenhead, but they would like to enquire whether the Nehru constitution could by any stretch of imagination be considered an agreed constitution when their so-called legitimate interests in the future scheme of government had not been adequately and unequivocally safeguarded. This could be supported by the utterances (all of which, of course, were not relevant) of the disappointed Ali Brothers, made at the December 1928 session of the Khalifat Conference. In his address Mauiana Mohamed Ali complained that the Congress leaders made compromises in their constitution every day with false doctrines, immoral conceptions and wrong ideas but they made no compromise with the communalists with separate electorate and reserve seats. Twenty-five per cent was the Muslim proportion of population and yet the Congress leaders would not give them 33 per cent in the Assembly. Reflecting on the Hindu Congressmen in a fit of anger he added:

You are a Jew, *a bania* But to the English you give the status of your dominion. Mr. B. C. Pal knows the

166. *The Indian Quarterly Register*, July-December 1928, Vol. 11, p. 422.

way to dominion status but does not know the way to Yarvada Jail.<sup>167</sup>

Muslim distrust of the Congress assumed greater and greater proportions; the ever-widening schism reappeared with all its consequences. In his presidential address Mohamed Ali vehemently criticized the Nehru Report as well as many of its prominent authors. He said the Congress leaders wanted to have the whole world admit every letter of the Nehru Committee Report. Mahatma Gandhi and Sir Ali Imam would be sitting under one flag and over them would fly the Union Jack. Pandit Motilal's solution was the worst of all. The Committee told them that the Report was good for the freedom not only of the country but also for the Punjab and other provinces. Today Pandit Motilal Nehru, the Maharaja of Mahmudabad, C.Y. Chintamani, Sir Ali Imam and others were in the same group but only recently Pandit Motilal had been imprisoned, his newspaper banned and the Maharaja of Mahmudabad was responsible for this. If tomorrow Jawaharlal were on the "gallows", Pandit Motilal would be held responsible. Continuing he said that Dr. Ansari was a "mere puppet" in the hands of Pandit Motilal. Only the other day they passed a resolution for *Swaraj* within the English Government if possible and without if necessary, and the time had come for them to say that *Swaraj* must be without the British Empire and yet Pt. Motilal Nehru was satisfied to feel that it was freedom. The link was nothing but a missing link. That power of veto would "poke and goad them just as the cartman goaded the bullocks who had the yoke on their shoulders."<sup>168</sup> Similarly Azad Sobhani believed that the Nehru Report had practically no objective before it. It was unsatisfactory to them as "to live like a slave was not proper and consistent with the religion of the Mussalmans". He also held that to him it was a folly for

167. Ibid, p. 403

168. Ibid p. 402.

the Muslims to follow any wordly organization like the Congress which was governed by human laws and regulations. In his view the doctrine of nationalism as being practised in India in his times should not be followed by his co-religionists.<sup>169</sup> Likewise, Hasrat Mohani also condemned the Report to be "wrong from start to finish." In his view the time of dynastic or constitutional monarchy had gone. The constitutional government as embodied in the Nehru Report was very injurious to the Mussalmans. The real idea of the report was to give "soft moral support" to the Mussalmans in some of the provinces outwardly and the residuary power had been left under the control of the Central Government. The Report meant "domination by the Hindus under the protection of the British bayonets." In his view dominion status was merely a "half-way house to the path of independence."<sup>170</sup> It may be recalled that as an alternative to the recommendations of the Nehru Report the session of the Khilafat Conference proposed in a resolution the establishment of a Federation of Free and United States of India consisting of fully autonomous provinces.<sup>171</sup>

Even before the meeting of Calcutta Convention the Ali Brothers had certain reservations on the Nehru Report. The Maulana was blowing hot and cold at the same time. At the Bihar and Orissa Muslim All-Parties Conference held earlier at Patna on 9 December 1928 Maulana Mohamed Ali had said in unequivocal terms that if they (Muslims) could not get rid of British rule, and there was no alternative but a Hindu Raj, he would prefer that Hindu Raj. Displaying an unprecedented patience this time he further stated that when the British were ousted, Muslims should demand their rights from Hindus who would have to submit. But simultaneously he seriously warned that if the Hindus did not concede these rights, they

169. *Ibid*, pp. 403-04.

170 *Ibid*.

171. *Ibid*, p, 404,

could get them even by force. They should not fear the majority. The history of Islam had taught them to have faith in their inherent strength. The Maulana also uttered the following sarcastic remarks on the Report:

In the days of the East India Company, the beat of drum was accompanied by the cry "creation is God's, the country is the King's, and the rule is that of John Company Bahadur". The Nehru Report in a nutshell meant that the creation was God's, the country was the viceroy's or the Parliament's and the rule was Hindu Mahasabha's.

Challenging this alleged state of affairs he further declared that the Muslims were not prepared to accept that position. No compromise was possible here. If the minority put forward safeguards for the protection of its rights how could it be said that it was against the principles of human nature? They had learnt from Mahatma Gandhi not to "haggle like a *bania*" but to make their minimum demand on the basis of the Madras Congress and Calcutta Muslim League resolutions and to stick to it. Appraising critically the political leadership of the country in the same statement, he added:

At present only too many Hindu leaders professed to be Nationalists, but were only communalists at heart. But only too many Muslim leaders professed or even boasted to be communalists but were only self-seekers at heart. The nation was being exploited by both to its ruin.<sup>172</sup>

In his letter written to the organizers of Calcutta Convention Maulana Shaukat Ali alleged that the way in which the Nehru Committee proceeded showed that its mentality was not that of an All-Parties Committee unprejudiced by the domination of any of the constituent organisations.<sup>173</sup>

172. *Ibid.*, p. 426.

173. *The Proceeding of the All-Parties National Convention, Appendix A*, p. 128.

To consider the recommendations of the Nehru Report, 38 Muslim Members of the Central Legislature convened the Muslim All-Parties Conference at Delhi on 31 December 1928. It was held under the presidentship of Sir Aga Khan whose politics had been rejected by the newly growing Muslim intelligentsia earlier. With ensuing of communal hostilities and bickerings he once more became active to divert the interest of his co-religionists from the movement of nationalism. Attendance at the Conference, including visitors, was 3,000. The principal motive of the Conference was outwardly stated to be to resolve the serious difference of opinion growing among the leading politicians of the community as well as the culmination of the disintegration of the All-India Muslim League, leading to the formation of two distinct bodies. Speaking at the Conference Maulana Mohamed Ali alleged that the All-Parties Convention at Calcutta, instead of fighting the Simon Commission, had agreed to Dominion Status. (In his speech at the Lucknow Convention he had asked whether they could defeat the Simon Commission by a policy of "defeatism" or by flying the Union Jack. In his view such an approach was cowardly.)<sup>174</sup> In his Delhi speech he alleged that there was no country in the world where there were untouchables so badly treated. With this maltreatment of their own "kith and kin", how was it possible for Muslims to trust the Hindus? Continuing his speech he advised the Muslims not to be afraid of the Hindu majority as in all their religious battles in the past one Muslim had overpowered three "Kafirs". In conclusion the speaker stated that by transferring residuary powers to the Central Government Pandit Motilal Nehru was aiming at the destruction of the strength of the Muslims to reduce them to the position of a "fly on his table". But even then they would have poison enough to "contaminate the dinner with cholera germs"<sup>175</sup>.

174. *Ibid*, p. 42.

175. *Indian Quarterly Register*, July-December 1928, Vol. II, pp. 416-17.

Conference after conference was held by the defected Muslims to express their indignation. Speaking at the U. P. Muslim All-Parties Conference, Maulana Shaukat Ali stated that he desired the Hindus to declare in clear terms whether they wanted peace or civil war. If they wanted war, the Muslims were prepared to take up the challenge any moment. "Muslims could always be victorious, born fighters as they were", he added. He also blamed the Hindus for having brought the future hopes of the country and national life to "zero point". In the same Conference Maulana Hasrat Mohani demanded the establishment of federal system of government which would give equal opportunity to offer "tit' for tat".<sup>176</sup> Speakers in favour of joint electorates were perpetually interrupted. A resolution demanding safeguards on the basis of separate electorates was passed.<sup>177</sup>

By adopting a resolution on 28 December 1928 at Moradabad the *Jamiat ul-Ulema-e- Hind* communicated to the Secretary of the Calcutta Convention that in view of the fact that the Nehru Report Committee was irregularly constituted and had no adequate representation of Muslims on it and that the Nehru Report had not yet been adopted by the Muslims' All-Parties Conference, the Working Committee of *Jamiat* did not consider it necessary to elect its delegates to the Calcutta Convention.<sup>178</sup>

To undermine the influence of nationalist Muslims who were supporters of the Nehru Report, among their co-religionists the latter were forced to secede from the Khilafat Conference. The election to the Central Committee was forcibly stopped by the Ali Brothers and their followers with the help of a few rowdies in Bengal, Bihar and N.W.F.P.<sup>179</sup>.

176. *Ibid*, pp. 422-23.

177. *Ibid*, p. 424.

178. *Ibid*, pp. 424-25.

179. *Proceedings of All-Parties National Convention held at Calcutta*, p. 71.

But the most surprising aspect of the Muslim opposition to the Nehru recommendations lay in the fact that the Muslims in the provinces where they were in hopeless minority had been struggling for the supposed rights of the Muslim majorities in the Punjab and Bengal while the majority of Muslims in those provinces had already accepted the Calcutta decisions and were neither interested nor needed their co-religionists in other provinces to champion their cause.<sup>180</sup> There lay a great danger in the use of this class of reactionary Muslims by the bureaucracy to discredit the cause of nationalism not because they were right and the framers of the recommendations were wrong but because their very existence was to be used to display that the framers of the new constitution had insufficient support in the country.

This selfish attitude showed that still the Muslim leaders were not perhaps ready to express their faith in the greatest good of all the parties and the people of India. They still did not feel convinced of the genuine necessity of inculcating a national spirit irrespective of social caste and religious creed.

180. For instance, in spite of the fact that in 1928 the non-Muslims voters for the Punjab District Boards numbered about 3,02,000 and the Muslim voters about 2,68,000 only, Muslims had captured 408 seats out of a total of 815 which is just over 50 per cent. In 15 out of 28 districts the Muslim members exceeded Hindus and Sikhs combined. While there were 9 districts where no Sikh had been elected and 4 where no Hindu had been elected. There was only one district where the Muslims failed to capture a single seat.

[*Supplementary Report, of the Nehru Committee* (Allahabad, A.I.C. C. 1928), p. 24.]

Somewhat similar interesting results were found in the District Board election in Bengal that very year. In spite of the fact that the electoral roll was based on property qualifications where the Muslim voting strength was weak economically, it was found that they made a clean sweep of the Hindu minority in three districts Mymensingh, Chittagong and Jassore.

[For detailed study see *The Nehru Committee Report* (Allahabad, A. I. C. C., 1928), p. 47].



Not attaching much importance to the services rendered by the Hindu nationalists in their movement of Khilafat they failed to realize that all the Hindus were not selfish. There were many among them who had elevated themselves to the level of humanity making no distinction between man and man. In their lifetime religion had appeared to signify bigotry and fanaticism, and intolerance and narrow-mindedness. Its chief source of inspiration appeared to be hatred of those who did not profess it. It was the ridiculous cause of communal conflict. The way in which it was practised was the biggest source of artificial distinctions between man and man and it hindered the development of a healthy and co-operative national life. Mixing it with politics did good to neither. Religion had degraded its spiritualism and in politics its capacity to elevate humanity. Complete separation of one from the other was the only solution in the prevailing circumstances. But the Muslim dissensionists were not ready to compromise on their claim of special communal advantages. "Some of these would reserve to a handful", alleged Pandit Motilal Nehru in his Calcutta session presidential address, "the right to arrest the whole course of the country's legislation."<sup>181</sup> Such Muslims did not appear to be interested in the lasting good of the country. They adhered to such theories and dogmas as had no relation to the living facts of the prevailing political situation. With a statement issued during these controversial days Sir Aga Khan joined the ranks of the damaging critics when he said that the British people could never honourably consent to leave an armed force or even civil administration in a country for the good government of which it was no longer responsible. He added that "if the British did this in a fit of madness, of which there has been no parallel in history, they would go down not only in the estimation of the whole world, but in history for all time, for

181. K M. panikkar and A. Pershad, ed., *Voice of Freedom*, a collection of Pt. Motilal Nehru's speeches (Asia Publishing House, 1961), p.63.

supplying armed force to a country wherein their responsibility had come to an end to be administered at the beck and call of other people.”<sup>182</sup> How strange it looks that Sir Aga Khan, who was so much solicitous about the power and prestige of the alien rulers, could rarely concern himself with the welfare and prestige of his own nation and people. By issuing such statements he appeared reluctant to compromise on British autocracy in India, to whose perpetuation the nationalist forces could never agree.

One of the positive contributions that the Nehru Report did make, was the recognition of the necessity of widening the franchise and thereby accepting the introduction of adult franchise and the principle of majority rule in implementing any future scheme of constitutional reforms. The Committee maintained that the average Indian voter understood his business, and he could form an opinion on matters that affected his discretion. This provided a great impetus to the forces interested in the introduction of democratic rather than despotic, princely or arbitrary, political system. But Maulana Mohamed Ali who had already been antagonized by the other limitations of the Report, began to find defects in this point too. Brought up in a religious environment where there were rare possibilities of making an individual acquainted with the importance of modern democratic and secular institutions, Maulana Mohamed Ali was more of a theologian than a progressive secular thinker. He was perhaps never convinced that the only method of providing a feeling of security to a particular religious minority was safeguards and guarantees and the grant, as far as possible, of cultural autonomy; the technique of separate franchise and reservation of seats did not guarantee this security. To him the recognition of this principle could only mean strengthening the hands of the Hindu majority

182. *Supplementary Report of the Nehru Committee* Allahabad, A. I. C. C., 1928), p. 9.

against the Muslim minority, rather than majority rule by a social and economic group. In his presidential address delivered at the Bihar and Orissa 'All - Parties Muslim Conference held at Patna on 9 December 1928, he was least charitable towards the Hindus. He said that he would not give up his religious principles to please the Hindus. If the latter did not concede Muslim rights, they would get them even by force. He quoted history to show that there had never been a majority rule in India, but for the first time now, the Government of the country was going to be a majority rule. How could it be possible, he added, when the Hindus constituted 66 per cent and the Muslims were only 25 per cent.<sup>183</sup>

Expressing his indignation against the Hindu community in his speech at the U.P. Muslim All - Parties Conference on 4 November 1928 Maulana Shaukat Ali was clear enough in stating that circumstances had forced him to speak:

We could have wiped out a community by annihilating the Hindus when we were rulers of India and wielded absolute powers. But Islam never wanted us to crush down the weak. But in spite of all this, the Hindus with their leaders of to-day, were deadly opposed to Muslims and their just interests. The Hindus were well-organised by virtue of the Maha Sabha, and I failed to find any thoughtful Hindu who could check its aggressive and hostile activities....Let the Hindus understand that Muslims could not be subdued under any circumstances....Hindus had been habituated to slavery, and they would remain slaves for long. But the Muslims were a freedom-loving people and could not submit to either Hindu or British rule.<sup>184</sup>

183. *Indian Quarterly Register* (Calcutta) July-December 1928, Vol II, p. 426.

184. *Ibid*, p, 422.

During these controversial days a meeting of A.I.C.C was held on 26 December, 1928. Shaukat Ali did not attend it. He had taken a pledge not to participate in any mixed gathering of Hindus and Muslims for one year unless the suspicious atmosphere was changed. He also declared his intentions, in the meantime, to devote his time and energy exclusively to organizing Muslims for the service of the country.

These retrogressive policies made the Ali Brothers retreat from their idealistic aim of making the national liberation movement a union of all "down-trodden and oppressed humanity suffering untold torture and humiliation under the heel of Europe."<sup>184</sup>

### **Rejection of Jinnah's Demands**

It would not be out of context to state that if the demands of the Ali Brothers appeared to be totally communal and so only worth rejecting, the demands put forward by the other Muslim group led by Jinnah should have been accommodated. But it appears from the proceedings of the All-Parties Convention that the Hindu Constitutionalists were bent upon rejecting every demand put forward by those Muslims whose thinking was still predominantly governed by the idea of safeguarding their community's interests. It counted very little whether such demands were raised in a form whose less communal character could have been adjusted with the original recommendations of the Nehru Committee. Most of the movers of the demands of the latter quality were such Muslims as had joined the National Congress with the genuine urge of serving the secular cause of nationalism even before the concept of separate franchise was born. And when this concept was to be materialized under

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184. Extract from the letter written by Mohamed Ali to Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru in 1923; Jawaharlal Nehru, *A Bunch of Old Letters* (Asia Publishing House 1959), no. 30-1.

the Minto-Morley Scheme they vehemently opposed it from the Congress platform. But certain prejudices developed among the Congressmen against such nationalist Muslims because of their opposition to the Non-Co-operation Movement, which had appeared to them the anti-thesis of their traditional background of loyal liberalism. Due to this antagonism the former branded the latter communalists and the latter retorted by rebuking the former as impractical idealists. At the assembly of the All-Parties Conference at Calcutta these prejudices determined the approach of either party towards the solution of the problems faced by the Conference.

One more thing is worth mentioning in this connection. There is never made a choice between good and evil. Even a man possessing the least common sense will obviously choose the former. Choice is always to be made between a greater evil and lesser evil to find an adjustable solution of the problem. If the acceptance of separate electorates as desired by the Ali Brothers appeared completely against the interests of the nation, the *real politik* demanded the acceptance of the lesser evil presented in the less communal form by Jinnah at the Calcutta Meeting on 28 December 1928. The substance of Jinnah's demands was :

- (1) One-third seats in both the Houses of the Central Legislature and distribution of excess seats to provinces with Muslim minority;
- (2) Reservations of seats in case of adult suffrage in Bengal and the Punjab on the population basis for ten years;
- (3) (a) Vesting of residuary powers with provinces and not the Central Government;  
(b) Deletion of clause 13A in the supplementary report;  
(c) Revision of schedules 1 and 2;
- (4) Unconditional separation of Sind immediately after the establishment of the new Government, and

**(5) Reservation of posts in the services.<sup>185</sup>**

In support of his scheme Jinnah made a conciliatory, persuasive but not aggressive statement. Moving his amendments he stated :

I am not speaking on this question as a Mussalman but as an Indian. You must remember that the two major communities in India are Hindus and Mussalmans and naturally, therefore, these two communities have got to be reconciled, united and made to feel that they are marching together.<sup>186</sup>

Jinnah desired the security of the minority to be guaranteed. He added :

We are sons of this land, we have to live together. We have to work together and whatever our differences may be, let us not arouse bad blood. Nothing will make me more happy than to see Hindus and Muslims united.<sup>187</sup>

Judged by the requirements, necessities and ethics of nationalism Jinnah was certainly a better nationalist than the Ali Brothers who perhaps became nationalist just to serve their

185. Summary Report of the proceedings of Convention published in the *Indian Review* (Madras, 1929), Vol XXX, p 29. For clarification see also Kuldip Nayar, *Distant Neighbours* (Delhi, 1972), p.9.

It may be recalled in this connection that the Convention that had met on the 27 had assumed a more representative character as the Central Khilafat Committee and the Muslim League had sent their delegations. After a prolonged discussion a Committee was selected to meet the representatives of the Muslim League. This Joint Committee of Hindus and Muslims met along and discussed but came to no definite solution. Nor could they assent to the Bengal Hindus' demand for reservation of seats in the Legislature. [Ibid.]

186. Cited by Kanji Dwarkadas, n. 147, p. 341,

187. Ibid.

religious cause of Khilafat. It is noteworthy that Jinnah on that occasion did not want separate electorates or weightage for Muslims. Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru pressed the Conference to accept Jinnah's suggestions in order to secure a settlement. He said :

The simple position is that for the sake of settlement you are invited by Mr. Jinnah however illogically and unreasonably to agree to this proposition, which I consider not inconsistent with the Nehru Report. Speaking for myself, I would like you to picture Mr. Jinnah, whom I have known intimately for fifteen years, as a spoilt child. If he is a spoilt child, a naughty child, I am prepared to say. give him what he wants and be finished with it. I am not going to ask him to be reasonable but we must, as practical statesmen, try to solve the problem and not be misled by arithmetical figures.<sup>188</sup>

The pioneers of the meeting, however, not only ignored this valuable advice, but also interrupted him with repeatedly saying 'No'. They rejected Jinnah's demand *in toto* without realizing the consequences of his warning that the reluctance of the Hindu nationalists might result in a revolution or civil war. At least on this occasion the Liberal leadership had acted far-sightedly and in the best interests of the nation. The reasons for not accepting Jinnah's demands appears to be that all the three groups in the Congress, viz, the Muslims, the Secular Hindu nationalists and the Hindu-minded Congress leaders were opposed to Jinnah on personal grounds because of the latter's intellectual calibre and passionate unmanagability. The Muslim group in the Congress such as Dr. Ansari, Azad, etc. perhaps thought at the moment the rapprochement between Jinnah and

188. The Extract quoted by Chimanlal H. Setalvad, who attended the deliberations of the Convention as Liberal delegate, *Recollections and Reflections* (Bombay, Padma Publications Ltd., 1926), p. 350; *Report of the proceedings of the All Parties Convention*, p. 84.

189. Report at..., n. 188 p. 93.

the Congress arrived, they would be nowhere. Because of old, personal grievances as well as the intellectual complexity within the second group of Congress leaders, mostly composed of the followers of Gandhiji, they were not ready to parley with Jinnah. Because of their already identified Hindu communalism the leaders of the third group within the Congress could in no way yield to any Muslim demand, leave alone Jinnah's. The chief organization through which last group functioned, viz, the Hindu Mahasabha, gave an ultimatum on the occasion of accepting the recommendations that if a single word of the Nehru Report in respect of the communal settlement was changed, it would immediately withdraw its support.<sup>190</sup> Especially Mr. Jayakar, who claimed to represent the Hindu view, vehemently opposed Jinnah's suggestion. He emphasized that by acceding to Jinnah's demands the Report would be torn to pieces and the whole structure would topple down. He denied Jinnah's right to speak on behalf of his Muslim co-religionists, stating that he only represented a small fraction of Muslims.<sup>191</sup>

190. *Indian Annual Register*, January-June 1929, Vol. I, p. 528.

191. The proceedings of the *All-Parties National Convention*, pp. 88 and 91.

Such an adherence to hard and fast line of Hindu emotionalism by leaders like Jayakar not only proved disastrous to the future of India, but also showed on their part the lack of vision and application of wrong strategy in the hour of need. While in 1928 the moderation was required it was conspicuous by its absence; on the eve of independence when it was dire necessity to show toughness towards the Muslim League, Jayakar pleaded moderation. 'It may be recalled that when the Constituent Assembly met at New Delhi from 9 December 1946 onwards, to frame the constitution, without the participation by Muslim League Members a substitute resolution to the original official resolution [moved by Pandit Nehru] was moved by Dr. Jayakar. It urged that the Constituent Assembly would postpone further consideration of a declaration on India's future until the Muslim League was present [The New York Times, 18 December 1946, P. 25 col. 2.] Maybe, the stark *real politik* taught moderation to him. But it was too late. By the time he learnt moderation, the other side led by Jinnah had moved to the other extreme.



But, for that matter even Jayakar could not claim to represent the bulk of Hindus. It appears strange today that persons like Motilal Nehru and others conceded to the preposition of Mr. Jayakar, who represented a minor fraction of the Swarajists and who only a few years before had quarrelled with the leader of the Swarajists to fulfil his hankering after office and had seceded from the main current of nationalism to end his political career by accepting the Judgeship in a high court. Actually speaking, Jayakar's attack on communal adjustment was the "second and last nail in the coffin of Nehru Report."<sup>192</sup>

Looking to later developments one could not but regret that on the occasion of the Calcutta sitting the wonderful chance of bringing about a permanent peaceful political settlement of the communal problem was lost. Unity became beyond reach. "This", Jinnah is reported to have told a friend, "is the parting of the ways."<sup>193</sup> Later on he also told Lord Mountbatten that it was the behaviour of the Hindus that had made it impossible to remain in a united India.<sup>194</sup> "By a crude combination of legal sophistry and political short-sightedness", Hiren Mukerjee comments, "the chance was lost."<sup>195</sup> No sane person could think that Jayakar in the light of subsequent political developments could say that Mr. Jinnah later represented only a small fraction of Muslims. Mr. Jayakar was to lose another good opportunity to settle amicably the communal question in London on the occasion of the Round Table Conference in 1931

Had Jinnah's demands been accepted, there was not only greater probability of Jinnah's returning to the national mo-

192. Kanji Dwarkadas, n., 147.p. 342.

193. H. Bolitho, *Jinnah* (London, 1954), p. 25.

194. Conversation cited by Kuldeep Nayar, *Distant Neighbours*(Bombay, Vikas Publishing House Ltd, 1972), p 3.

195. Hiren Mukerjee, *The Gentle Colossus* (Calcutta, 1964), p. 95.

vement and thereby giving his assistance in the task of national reconstruction, he and his followers would have also substantially, if not wholly, compensated the loss suffered by the national movement by the defection of a larger number of Muslim followers of the Ali Brothers from it. The position of the nationalist Muslim leadership would have gradually influenced the thinking of Muslim masses in the years to come.

But this did not happen. In comparison to the loss of Jayakar and others who even after the rejection of Jinnah's demands did not associate themselves completely with the national movement, the loss of Jinnah to the national movement for ever was a loss of immense magnitude and a great blow to nationalism, as subsequent years were to display. The disillusioned Jinnah retired from politics after some time, and left for England. Without a leader his followers also drifted towards communalism and gradually deserted the nationalist Muslim League and joined the communal faction of it led by Shafi and others. The Muslims were thus blinded by fear and fanaticism: the tide of Muslim fanaticism ran strongly against the Nehru Report. The British rulers, faced as they were with the threat of forthcoming Civil Disobedience had intensified the politics of *Divide et Impera* with all the patronage and strength of corruption at their disposal. The attempt to win the Muslims for the Nehru Report failed. The All-Parties Convention of December 1928 thus marked the turning-phase in the life of Jinnah and in the history of the sub-continent. So the end of 1928 saw the Congress losing the support of all sections of Muslim opinion outside its own ranks.

From the above developments it should, however, not be concluded that Jinnah had no fault of his own. Influenced by the prevailing communal mindedness he had descended far from the broad-based ideal of nationalism originally displayed

by him.<sup>196</sup> His demands were communal in a sense and to some extent unreasonable. He appeared to enhance the interests of his community at the cost of Hindus. If interests clashed it did not imply that one set of interest was to be swept away or that one religious community needed to smoothen its

196. With passage of time Jinnah reversed his position from "ambassador of unity" to "apostle of disunity" With the demand of Pakistan particularly he became harsh and unyielding. He used a cynical and rather familiar technique—repetition of slogans, inflammation of religious emotions and uncompromising demands. Measuring his behaviour in those critical days of national life the renowned American Correspondent in India, Herbert L. Mathews wrote: "Like Adolf Hitler, during his rise to power, Mr. Jinnah hammers away at new, simple ideas, using the same formula in his speech after speech. 'Pakistan', 'Self-determination' and 'we are a nation in our own birthright' are words and phrases that are never missing from his speech...[He is] exasperatingly deliberate man who seems to be taking pleasure in keeping the world guessing. In his delicate hands lies the answer to the riddle: Can Hindus and Muslims agree? .....It happens to be something like solving the riddle of the Sphinx. If the Sphinx refused to answer, all simplification in the world is not going to help—and Jinnah is giving a wonderful imitation of the Sphinx at present.....[In] the throes of Indian travial he holds in his hand more power for good or evil than any single Indian politician." [*The New York Times*, 4 October 1942, Vol. IV, pp, 4-5].

Harping on the situation that in regard to the settlement of India's intricacies nothing would be possible without the concurrence of the Moslem League Jinnah continued to sit tight and continued to play the negative politics that proved so profitable to his cause ultimately. Gradually Jinnah came to the position of calling triumphs partly because Britain built him up a foil to the growing power of Indian National Congress and partly because of the short sightedness of the Congress in India which underestimated his strength and his danger. The result was that while Britain was still *dejure* the paramount power, ironically, because of their own Indian policy, Jinnah had the *defacto* control of India's destiny. The followers of Jinnah were not so worried about his personal contradictions. Though

(footnote contd.)

existence to suit the entire. Each possessed its own virtues and its own ideals, each had its own privileges to maintain but at the same time each should have been capable of adjusting its own existence in the whole planning of national existence.

The weaknesses of the Report, which appeared to far, outweigh the good points made it so indispensable that no public men, in the words of Gandhiji, could afford to be without it.<sup>197</sup> Large number of Muslims were ready to destroy the "great edifice built by patient effort"<sup>198</sup> on the ground that they had not received all they cherished. They were feeling that the Report gave everything to one side and practically nothing to the other. Hindu Mahasabhaites vowed never to yield an inch and thus made an advance for nationalism improbable. The Sikhs apprehended that the Report tended to pave the way for another communal war as its recommendations were conceived

(previous footnote contd.)

he invoked the ancient Islamic spirit of Indian Moslems, yet he himself was rather casual in his acquaintance and observance of his followers' religious practices. He appeared more at home in elegant European attires—he was undoubtedly one of the best dressed men in the British Empire—than in traditional Indian dress. His staunch opponents accused him of arrogance and fixations which they asserted make it next to impossible to debate political controversies with him along rational lines. Commenting on his rigidity and irrationalism of those days another American Correspondent, George E. Jones, had despatched to his daily paper the following lines, "His spoken and written declarations hammer the single goal, brushing aside the hows and wherefors. To put it simply, he does not possess a discursive mind. He constitutes the foremost question mark in the Indian political dilemma." [*The New York Times*, 5 May 1946, vol. VI. p. 13].

197. *Young India*, 1927-28: a collection of writings (Madras, S. Ganesan, 1935), p. 794.

198. Extract from the letter written by Pt. Moti Lal Nehru to Sengupta and Subhas Chandra Bose on 19 July 1928; Jawaharlal Nehru, ed. by, *A Bunch of Old Letters*, n. 184, p. 61.

in a spirit of communalism. The political body of the Sikhs, the Central Sikh League, withheld its support and felt constrained not to participate any more in the deliberations of the Convention. The young intelligentsia dismissed it as a worthless product of old and aged minds having no relation to the progress of the times. Political theoreticians picked big loopholes in the submission. Even the Indian National Congress adopted it conditionally amidst vehement opposition, whereas non-Brahmins and the Depressed Classes were entirely opposed to it. Most of them were wrong—for they approached the Report from their own selfish individual angles. Nobody saw it from the national standpoint. All the resistance, therefore, could be said to be anti-national. Besides, the decisions of the Conference were taken by counting individual votes and not by ascertaining the views of the organizations which had sent their representatives. Above all, the framers of the Report failed to find an amicable solution of communal dissensions which cast their shadow over all political work. They had no remedy to remove from the minds of all communities a baseless fear of others and in providing a feeling of security to others and thus restoring harmony in human relations in a spirit of nationalism. Instead the Report ended in embittering the communal environment and there thus ensued open hostility between Hindus and Muslims. Public life was disfigured. Even the little forbearance, mutual respect, trust and give-and-take and confidence which had been hoped for and which were wanted by Gandhiji, became conspicuous by their absence. An attempt to bring unity and present a solid force against British imperialism was not only frustrated but instead the open breach provided to the common enemy an opportunity to get the Muslims out of the national movement. They had tried their level best to secure just this since the Hindu-Muslim *entente* of the Non-Co-operation Movement. After the defection of Sir Syed Ahmad Khan from the national movement in 1887 this was the second time when Muslims in large number began disassociating with the Congress.

There could be no other outcome but national loss from the endeavours of a committee which declined to take any lesson from the futility of similar endeavours made only a few years earlier: During the preparation of the Report there appeared little chance of the committee coming to a unanimous decision,<sup>199</sup> and when, however, the authors at last arrived at "some kind of unanimity"<sup>200</sup> the leader of the Committee felt that it was "neither complete nor of the genuine type." There was such a scramble for power in the long discussions that when the decisions of the Committee were worded they were recorded carelessly at the end of long sittings when everybody was too tired to care about words. They had to make constant reference to the members to make sure of their meaning. His doubts were justified at the proceedings conducted at the Lucknow meeting of the All-Parties Conference and the developments afterwards. By the time of the Calcutta session his disappointment was at its climax. He then wrote to Sengupta and Subhas Bose expressing his belief that taking into consideration the temper of the country it would not be easy to "pilot the so-called agreed constitution."<sup>201</sup> in the next Congress and if it was passed, it would be due more to the personalities defending it than the considered opinion of the "younger set."<sup>202</sup> To present the Report of a sharply divided house to an alien regime at this critical juncture could culminate in nothing but undermining the great national resistance and fervour created against the existence of foreign domination by the organization of huge demonstrations against the Simon Commission all over the country. The Simon Commission fully exploited this weakness. During its sojourn the members of the

199. Extract from the letter written by Pt. Motilal Nehru to Mahatmaji, *Ibid*, p. 58

200. *Ibid*.

201. Extract from the letter written to Sengupta and Subhas Chandra Bose, *Ibid*., p. 62.

202. *Ibid*.,

Simon Commission had been under the impression that it was inevitably necessary to reckon with the popular national upsurge in India. With the appearance of the Nehru Report the members went back to their former position that India was a house miserably divided against itself and that the Rajas and Zamindars and communal elements—the pillars of British power—were still too powerful to be ignored. The mass upsurge during their journey was merely a temporary phenomenon like the storm in a tea cup.

## CHAPTER VI

# CULTURAL RENAISSANCE

### A – Literature

*India's sun has in this river set  
In this very Ganges plunged,  
Dyed in our blood it shall rise again,  
Shall shine on us a fair....  
This is a day of nation's trial  
Or else of its liberation.*

*[Nazrul Islam, "Beware", Poems from East Bengal  
(Karachi, 1954) p. 73].*

### Revivalism

In various Indian languages revivalism continued to be emphasized as an essential trend of Indian nationalism. The *litterateurs* of the period under study too looked at the past as the creation of heroes and heroines, gods and goddesses and not of human beings only. To them the Aryan civilization appeared unique with its unchallenged and dynamic continuity. They picked up their characters from the remote past of the *Vedas* and they were particularly proud of what they considered to be their remarkable contribution in interpreting the golden age of India. They, therefore, took enormous pains to bring



to life mythical or legendary characters who had consolidated the achievements of a by gone era. In Marathi were written novels like *Arya Tej* (1919) by B.Y. Niphadkar; *Bal Vir Abhimanyu* and *Bal Vir Dhruva* (1923) by B.R. Thakar; *The Life of Krisna* (1923) by G.R. Sane; *Chatrapati Ram Raja* (1924) by R.S. Kulkarni and *Ram Rahim* by V.G. Satye. In this period Vasudev Nilakantha Agate also wrote his masterpiece called *Mahananda*. In Gujarati, Nana Lal stirred his people by his famous voluminous epic *Mahabharat* in verse. In it he tried to interpret the meaning of history and the trend of human civilization. He mainly concentrated his vision on the great struggle of Kurukshetra showing it as a tussle between good and evil.<sup>1</sup> In Assamese, Nalinbala Devi enquired into Indian philosophy, particularly the *Gita* and the *Upanishads* and the literature of Assamese Vaishnavite saints. Inspired by the patriotism of her father Nabin Chandra Bardolai she wrote some patriotic verses in which her love of the motherland and its glorious past were expressed with an intense and insistent passion. The splendour that was Bharat had been disclosed simultaneously with the splendour that Assam once was. The "*Bharati*" (Indian) and *Mahanader Atma-Kahani* (Autobiography of the Great River) were some such patriotic poems.

Sardar K. M. Panikkar was one of the most versatile writers in Malayalam. Besides being a historian and writer of distinction in English he was also a poet, dramatist and novelist in his mother-tongue. *Chintatangini* and *Ambapali* are a few of his poems dealing with the subject of revivalism. He also enriched Malayalam by translations like *Kumarasambhavam* from Sanskrit. Besides, he also wrote in classical style the plays like *Bhishmar*, *Mandodari* and *Dhruvaswamini*.

The re-interpretation of the ancient cultural heritage became also a striking peculiarity of the Kannada literature.

1. For further study see Balchandra Parikh, (Bombay, 1953) pp. 77-95.

K. V. Puttappa was the first modern Kannada poet to try the *Ramayana* story in its entirety. Among others while D. R. Bendra wrote *Meghdut* (one of the finest lyrics), P. T. Narasimhachar composed a long poem *Ganesa Darasana*. Beside, the legendary plays (*Garuda's Paduka Pattabhisheka*) and historical plays (Samsa's *Sugune Ghambhira* and Masti's *Talikote*) were also recognized as major contributions of the period. Masti also wrote the legendary stories like *The Last Days of Sariputra*.

In Telugu the antiquity was brought into the picture by the prominent writers. D.V. Krishnamachari wrote a number of popular dramas on Purana themes. The twin-poets Tirupati Sastri and Venkata Sastri wrote a long poem *Buddha-Caritaramu*. Likewise, Viswanatha Satyanarayana, one of the makers of renaissance in Telugu literature, composed *Soundera Nandam*, a long poem recalling the age of Buddha. The nobility of sentiment expressed in this Kavya has made it a classic *par excellence*. Revivalism got impetus also through the dramas. Translations from Sanskrit like *Shakuntalam*, *Mudra-rakshasa* and *Veni Samharam* and dramatized forms of the *Maharbhārata* and *Ramayana* and some historical dramas like *Bobbili* gained household popularity in Andhra.

In Hindi it was the *Chhayavadi Yug*.<sup>2</sup> Its leading figure was Jayashanker Prasad. His prominent historical plays are *Rajyashri*, *Vaishak*, *Ajatshatru*, *Janmejaya ka Nag Yajna*, *Dhru-*

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2. Irrespective of the fact that *Chhayavadi*, being a product of frustration and despair in life, created a personal world of imagination it can be pointed out that its impetus to individualism was a national characteristic. The substitution of the medieval, feudal view of life by the individualism of the twentieth century was positively a progressive phenomenon. In India, this individualism was further advanced by political consciousness and the national liberation movement. Under alien rule the free expression of the individual's opinions was improbable. So the *Chhayavadi* poets expressed them in symbolic language.

*swamini* and others. Appraising his contribution a historian of Hindi literature writes:

Prasad, in particular has introduced so many gracious scenes of the prosperous past that we completely forget the age of today. We are wonderstruck to observe the capacity, the courage and the deeds of our great and heroic personalities of the past. Through his dramas, the emotion of patriotism begins to flow in our own veins and we begin to sing as in *Chandragupta*:

अरुण यह मधुय देश हमारा ।  
जहां पहुंच क्षितिज को मिलता एक सहारा ॥

The glory and the lustre of our motherland fills our heart with immense energy. It instills in us a new vigour and new life when we listen to the famous song:

हिमाद्रि तुंग श्रग से प्रबुद्ध शुद्ध भारती ।  
स्वयं प्रभा समुज्ज्वला स्वतन्त्रता पुकारती ॥

Love for the motherland is not only restricted to his poetic compositions....There is an unambiguous call of patriotism in the plays of Jai Shanker. Whenever he speaks of Indian greatness, he is eloquent....As a matter of fact, this dramatist has infused a new life into the dull and dreary pages of history, and the pictures of the past begin to dance and move before our eyes.<sup>3</sup>

And it was left to Suryakant Tripathi "Nirala", one of the finest geniuses of the age, to lament over the vanishing of the glorious past of India in his *Anamika* (1924):

3. K.B. Jindal, *A History of Hindi Literature* (Allahabad, 1955) pp. 283-84.

क्या यह वही देश है  
 भीमार्जुन आदि का कीर्ति क्षेत्र... •  
 यह वही देश है  
 परिवर्तित होता हुआ देखा गया जहां  
 भारत का भाग्य चक्र....  
 यमुना की ध्वनि में  
 है गुंजती सुहाग-गाथा,  
 सुनता है अन्धकार खड़ा चुपचाप जहां !  
 आज वह "फिरदौस"  
 सुनसान है पड़ा ।  
 शाही दीनान-आम स्तब्ध है हो रहा,  
 दुपहर को, पार्श्व में,  
 उठता है झिल्ली रव,  
 बोलते हैं स्यार रात यमुना-कच्छार में,  
 लीन हो गया है रव,  
 शाही अंगनाओं का;  
 निस्तब्ध मीनार,  
 मौन हैं मकबरे  
 भय में आशा को जहां मिलते थे समाचर,  
 टपक पड़ता था जहां आंसुओं में सच्चा प्यार....  
 रुद्र रूप से सब डरते हैं, देस-देस भरते हैं आह,  
 मृत्यु रूपिणी मुक्त कुन्तला माँ की नहीं किसी को चाह ।  
 उष्णधार उद्गार रुधिर का करती है जो बारम्बर,  
 भीमश्रुजा की, बीन छीनती, वह जंगी नंगी तलवार ।<sup>4</sup>

Influenced by the revivalist trend K.M. Munshi also wrote a novel *Verani Vosulat* (The Taking of Revenge) in 1919. In this writing he tried to establish a synthesis between the ideals of modern West and ancient India. The hero of the

4. *Ibid*, Appendix XIII, pp. 359-60, Suryakant Tripathi "Nirala", *Anamika* (Allahabad, 1937) pp. 58 and 62-3.

novel, Jagat Kishore, is a young intellectual and for domestic troubles leaves home, and on the advice of a sincere and honest saint with the learning of a German professor, the administrative ability of an Englishman, artistic taste of a cultured Italian and the selfless insight and patience of an Indian *Rishi*, becomes a *sadhu*. He is inspired with the ambition of purifying the moral atmosphere of India, stirring up its people to new life, educating them on right lines and setting before them high ideals of devotion and sacrifice.

Munshi, however, did not confine himself merely to exploring the remote antiquity. Despite his pre-occupation for years together with India's past, K.M. Munshi had been "extraordinarily sensitive to the charms of medieval Gujarat, which threw up a galaxy of individuals immortalized in the pages of his many romances. Personages who were thought of hitherto as minor characters had been moulded into heroic proportions.<sup>5</sup> In 1916 appeared his *Patanani Prabhuta*, as a serial in the weekly journal *Gujarati*, and then in a book form, as the usual yearly present of the journal. In 1918-19 was published the *Gujarat-no-Nath* (the Lord of Gujarat). In 1920-21 was written *Prithvi Vallabh* (The Beloved of the World). Influenced by Brigg's *Cities of Gujarat* Munshi also wrote an article entitled *Gujarat, the Grave of Vanished Empire*, which was published in the Baroda College Magazine. The first two novels deal with those years in the history of Gujarat, in the tenth and eleventh centuries, when Solanki Rajputs had just recovered their strength and driven away the remnants of the Muslim force after Ghaznavi's ruin of the holy shrine of Somanath.

In 1922 Munshi visited the shrine of Somanath for the first time. In its deserted, burnt and battered shape, the temple appeared to him the monument of India's humiliation

5. N. C. Mehta, "Munshi in Life & Literature", *Munshi: His Art and Work* (Bombay, 1962) Vol. I, p. 252.

by Mahmud Ghaznavi. Its broken floor of the once-hallowed *Sabhamandap* supported by broken pillars and scattered stones, took his mind back to 1024 when before its destruction, the mighty *acharyas* and kings bowed in reverence at the door-step of the sanctum and the large number of people came daily with anxiety to have *darshan* of the deity. In his imagination Munshi also saw the invader, his killing of the worshippers and breaking the image into three parts. Out of this imagination he wrote two articles in the *East and West* (a leading monthly of Bombay) and his famous novel *Jay Somnath*.

Munshi thus undoubtedly raised the stature of Gujarati literature, infused new life into it and consolidated a particular phase of Indian culture theoretically. Yet when a real attempt to resurrect the ancient splendours of *Ram-Rajya* and the medieval glories of Gujarat was made by Gandhiji (a leader hailing from his own region) by organizing the Non-Co-operation Movement in order to eliminate the biggest obstacle of foreign rule in its way, Munshi did not align himself with the movement. In fact, along with Jinnah he clashed with Gandhiji in 1920 when the latter tried to change the name of the Home Rule League into *Swarajya Sabha*. On losing the tussle he and Jinnah walked out of the meeting. Soon after he resigned from the Congress also. To him the Gandhian principles appeared unconvincing, and his methods reactionary. "His nationalism, his philosophy of active life...bear," comments Vishnuprasad R. Trivedi in an appraisal of this outstanding Gujarati litterateur, "the stamp of Sri Aurobindo."<sup>6</sup> The idea of superman, the hero, a person above the average, fascinated him greatly. Perhaps, therefore, the winning of glamorous women by men of personality and power became with him a constant theme. "Generally, the central personal issue in Munshi's novels," comments Vishnuprasad R. Trivedi, "does not go beyond the struggle for

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6. *Munshi at Seventy-Five*, a volume of articles on the various facets of K. M. Munshi by his contemporaries (Bombay, 1962) pp. 126.

supremacy between a man of exceptional sagacity, learning, steadfastness or valour and a masterful woman of exquisite charm and accomplishments.”<sup>7</sup>

Resuming the reference to the impact of revivalism it can be stated that in Oriya language too the writings on shrines occupied a prominent place. Gopabandhu Das, the founder of *Satyabadi* school and who is looked upon in Orissa more as a national institution than saintly figure with lofty ideals of service and sacrifice, wrote in 1925-26 the *Dharampada*, the tale of supreme sacrifice of a boy of that name in the building of the renowned shrine of *Konarka*. The dedication of life by the boy-mason was symbolized by the author as the modern ideal for the Indian citizen to follow and to forego his own interests for those of the state, the community and the nation. This spirit of revivalism and a national service reached its climax in Gopabandhu with the inauguration of the Non-Co-operation Movement. His participation in the struggle led to his arrest. He wrote a long poem *Bander Atma Katha* (confessions of a prisoner) while he was being taken to jail in a train. In this famous writing he put the cause of national freedom above everything else:

Let my mortal frame be mingled  
     with this country's clay,  
 And let my countrymen trample over my back,  
     Let all the crevices that lie in the path of Swaraj,  
 Be filled up with my flesh and bones. <sup>8</sup>

In this popular verse can be summed up the message of Gopabandhu. He also told his countrymen:

7 . *Ibid*, p. 128.

8 . *Literatures in Modern Indian Languages*, a collection of writings (New Delhi. The Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1957) p. 239.

It is my last wish and prayer that at the cost of my life you may march a step forward towards the goal of independence.<sup>9</sup>

Another important revivalist writer of Orissa is Radhanath. He became famous for transplanting Greek and Roman mythology in Oriya landscape so successfully that monuments and shrines in Orissa have begun to be known and explained according to what he wrote about them in his verse. Indeed he is eulogized for having "Hellenised Oriya literature by bringing into its circle all the local gods and goddesses of Orissa and by building up stories with the flesh and blood of Orissan history and legends of these local gods and goddesses on Greek and Roman frameworks."<sup>10</sup> This fact is very well illustrated by his long poem "*Chandrabhaga*." In it the poet tried to provide a poetic explanation for the destruction of the renowned sun-shrine of Konarka. Broadly speaking, it was nothing but the tale of Appolo and Daphne of the European classics.<sup>11</sup>

Unlike the Bengali playwrights who had to search the annals of Rajputana and Maharashtra for material of their historical plays, the Oriya counterparts got adequate material, in the heroes of Orissan history, the brave kings Kharabela, Kapilendra, Purushottam and Amangabhima under whose flags the Oriyas had once conquered and ruled empires.

In Marathi literature too revivalism of medieval and recent past was emphasized through the poems like the *Dakhkhanca Vir* (1921) by G.R. Hinganeker and translated novels like *Anand Math* by B.S. Kulkarni in 1923. But most stirring plays

9. *Ibid.*

10. Mayadhar Mansinha, "Oriya", Dr. Nagendra, ed., *Indian Literature*, short and critical surveys of 12 major Indian languages and literatures (Agra, 1959) p. 499.

11. For further study see *Ibid.*



were written by the prolific play-writer Santaram Gopal Gupte) whose first historical drama entitled *Raktadhvaja* (bloody flag) in 1918 was the stirring story of Rana Pratap. While studying in matriculation he wrote his more famous drama *Hira Harpale* in 1921 dealing with the tragic end of Tanaji Malusare. In 1922 Gupte wrote *Raniragini*, a tragedy of the short but eventful story of Rani of Jhansi. The book was proscribed by the Bombay Government soon after its publication. In 1927 Gupte also wrote *Siyasamrat*, a historical song drama.<sup>12</sup>

In Bengali the Rajput heroism was glorified. Abanindranath Tagore wrote stories on the topic. Later on they were collected in the two volumes of *Rajkahani*. Besides, the novles like *Karuna* (dealing with the early days of the decline of the Gupta Empire) Karunanidhan Banerji also wrote the novels like *Mayukh* (1917), *Asim* (1924). His *Lutphulla* (connected with the occupation of Delhi by Nadir Shah) was serialized in 1927-29.

In Telugu revivalism of medieval period got impetus when K. Srinivas Rao wrote historical plays on Prithviraja and on the fall of Vijayanar empire. Influenced and inspired by the Bengali and Marathi novels reminding the people of the days when India was free, in Kannada while the novels of Bankim Chandra were translated by B. Venkatachar, Apte's Marathi novels were translated by Galaganatha. Vijnana Chandrica Mandali (1911-20), a group of writers composed novels and biographies on Shivaji.

12. Some other significant writings of the period were the *Pratapi Pratapsimha* (1924) by H. K. Kulkarni; the *Panhalgadaca Killedar* (1922) by Kirat; *Santaji Ghorpade Yanca Vadh* (Murder of Santaji Ghorpade, the General of Sivaji and Rajaram Maharaj) and *Life of Brahmendra Svami* (dealing with an influential Svami in the later times of the Maratha Empire) by Visnu Lakshman Kale.

In Assamese too similiar plays were written. The Muslim invasions of Assam during the Ahom period, the resistance of the people, the valour and heroism shown by kings, their generals and soldiers, patriotic self-sacrifice of individuals and occasional court-conspiracies, wars and revolts of succession were dealt with. Daiba Chandra Talukdar's *Bamuni Kanwar* comes within this category. The novel *Rangili* (1925) by Rajanikanta Bardolai dealt with the historical background of Burmese invasion. His another novel *Dandwa Droha* (1919) dealt with the revolt of Kamrup people against the Ahom rule.

In Hindi, Vrindavan Lal Verma tried to rehabilitate the past by writing novels like *Mrignayani*. It took the reader back to fifteenth century when Man Singh Tomar succeeded in resisting six invasions of Sikandar Lodi on the fortress of Gwalior. The setting of *Virata ki Padmini* dealt with the days when the Mughal Empire was declining and fissiparous tendencies were rampant all over the country. Emperor Farrukhsiyar was depicted as a show-boy of the King-makers, the Syed Brothers. Raja Chhatrasal was glorified for having brought the entire Bundelkhand under his rule.

It is necessary to point out here that such writings became a source of inspiration for the Hindus only. A large number of Muslims looked upon them as an instrument of encroachment applied against their community. They failed to make a rational interpretation that such writings were not solely an expression of encroachment upon them. They were also an instrument of struggle against uncontrolled oppressive despotism, corrupt political institutions, illegitimate encroachment upon territorial sovereignty and clandestine court-intrigues of succession to throne, irrespective of caste and community.

An explanation rendered by Hindu writers is that, since a frankly anti-British plot would certainly be proscribed, it was safe and prudent to present the image of an anti-Muslim struggle. This was true, but it is difficult to imagine as to how an

average Muslim could be convinced by such pragmatic approach. What was actually required was the boldness to sacrifice. A major share of this bold action was to be borne by the Hindu *litterateurs* like the young militant nationalists engaged in day-to-day anti-British activities, because politically and culturally (including modern education) they were more advanced and larger in number than their counterparts among Muslims. But such a spirit was conspicuous by its absence in them. Practically most of them wrote about the struggle of the Marathas, Rajputs and Sikhs against the Muslims. And their source of inspiration was the *Annals and Antiquities of Rajasthan* by Tod, a British writer. Even Tagore who could by no stretch of imagination be called anti-Muslim, wrote on prominent Hindu heroes like Shivaji, Rana Pratap and Guru Govind Singh. Except for the lonely poem on Taj Mahal where he had to bring in Shahjahan to glorify romance, no prominent Muslim hero (even Akbar who made the first major and sincere attempt to unite Hindus and Muslims) stirred his imagination to produce a verse. Even when Gandhiji organized the Non-Co-operation Movement—a synthesized struggle of Hindu-Muslim interests—Tagore sharply differed with him, though the reasons were not at all communal. In fact, the political controversy between the two is conspicuous for its becoming an integral part of the national movement.<sup>13</sup> All this obviously, though unconsciously, hindered the growth of composite nationalism in Indian literature. This gap appeared to be fulfilled to some extent when in Malayalam N.V.V.K. Tampuran wrote a masterly essay on Akbar.

Parallel to the trend of Hindu revivalism there also continued to be emphasized the Muslim revivalism. Its topmost writer of

13. It is, however, to be admitted that Tagore conceded to Gandhiji that the latter had introduced an element of spirituality in the struggle for national emancipation. He looked upon Gandhiji as a saint whose movements appeared to be hallowed by spiritual serenity. On 10 April 1921, Tagore wrote: "We are grateful to Gandhi for giving India a chance to prove that her faith in the divine spirit of man is still living." "Letters from Aboard," *Modern Review* (Calcutta, 1921) Vol XXX, P. 210.

the period was Mohammed Iqbal. He had left far behind that phase of life, when by producing the secular verses like *Ram* (glorifying the contribution of *Ram Raj* to the growth of Indian civilization and culture) and “*Sare Jahan se Achcha Hindostan Hamara Mazhab nahin sikhata apas men bair rakhna; Hindi dain ham vatan hai Hindostan hamara*” in people’s language, he appeared to emerge as the real nationalist poet of the people. His conversion to Pan-Islamism which belied the people’s hopes, was not a momentary phenomenon. On the other hand, the new trend became so deeply entrenched in his mind that it became a permanent guiding philosophy of his life. In its pursuit he wrote too longish poems *Tulu-i-Islam* (the Rise of Islam) and *Khizr-i-Rah* (the Guide of the Way). Both of them reflected his reaction to the political turmoil around him and, in particular, to the crisis of the Muslim world after disappearance of the Caliphate. They produced no fresh disciples of Iqbal, nor did they contain any fresh ideas. They represented variations on the theme which Iqbal was to repeat again and again obsessed by an intense emotional excitement. The central idea of this theme always emphasized the Muslim unity transcending all national boundaries and racial limits. In these poems Iqbal once more warned his co-religionists to beware of the dangers of territorial patriotism and he particularly exhorted Indian Muslims not to be manoeuvred by the traps of Montagu-Chelmsford reforms which had been brought in to temporarily pacify the political discontent. Both *Tulu-i-Islam* and *Khizr-i-Rah*, despite the fame which they obviously enjoyed among Iqbal’s Muslim readers, were necessarily insular in their inspiration. Though this sort of criticism cannot be levelled against this another collection of Persian verse *Payam-i-Mashriq* (Message of the East) appearing in 1923, yet his source of inspiration could only be the Persian poets like Nizami, Sadi and Hafiz who influenced Goethe and other German poets in their literary contribution. Moreover, in this collection too he could not restrain himself from dwelling on his concept of Islamic internationalism :

We are not Afghans, We are not Turks or Tartars,

We are of one Garden and of one branch.

The thought of colour and smell is anathema to us,

For we are nurtured by the same new Spring.<sup>14</sup>

It is true that most of these revivalist writers felt that a nation or a community which did not feel proud of its antiquity, could have no future and it was their aim, through their novels, poems, songs, plays and stories to recapture the glory and the grandeur that was antiquity. But it is also a fact that such writings lacked the capacity to fulfil the requirements of contemporary India. In their days India was passing through one of the great epochal transformations of history in which the tempo of socio-political changes was rapid. All that one could say was that the gods and heroes of the Vedas, and the prophets and warriors of Arabia had not only virtually ceased to resolve the crisis of Modern India but created dissension in Indian polity. Irrespective of her long and continuous tradition, India was more inclined to look forward than backward. The newly growing generation of intelligentsia was more dedicated to solve the mundane and concrete complexities of life than in recalling the memories of antiquity, however remarkable and inspiring its hues might have been, just because that antiquity did not matter or had but little importance in moulding the shape of the future.

#### Secular Trend of Violence

After the end of World War I there was an emergence of some new trends in Indian literature. The complexities of Indian life—partly the result of social conditions<sup>15</sup> and prima-

14. Mohammed Iqbal, *Payam-i-Mashriq*, translated by Mahmudul Haq, quatrain 83 (Hyderabad), p. 52.

15. This feature of Indian Social life found its appealing expression not only in the writings of Sharat and Prem Chand but also in the poems of Kumaran Asan, the Malayalam poet. In *Chandala*

\* (footnote contd )

rily due to the oppression of alien rulers—do compel the Indian *litterateurs* to discover a *modus vivendi*. One of its aspects is reflected in the writings of Nazrul Islam, Sharat Chandra Chatterji, Mama Varerkar and others. In their works they preached the adoption of violent means to overthrow or destroy the existing order. But it does not imply that they were the first among the *litterateurs* to suggest it. Already in the late nineteenth century in his *Anand Math*, Bankim—and his method was followed by a large number of writers—had suggested it. But there existed a fundamental difference between the two. It is true that Bankim did a work of great national significance for the whole of India through his great song *Vande Matram* when he gave to the largest number of Indians a most appealing, most stirring and most satisfying medium to express their emotions of patriotism and thus became the harbinger of converting the overwhelming majority of Indians to the ideal of patriotism. It is also a fact that among *litterateurs* it was for the first time Bankim who through his song gave a vision of the Motherland,<sup>16</sup> which through the efforts of subsequent *litterateurs* in various Indian languages revealed to the mind of Indians as something more than a stretch of earth—a Motherland incorporating in its image the welfare of all the masses of individuals living within India. And it is not an exaggeration that once this vision had come to the people, according to Aurobindo, there could be “no rest, no peace, no further slumber till the temple had been made ready, the image installed and the sacrifices offered. A great nation which had had that vision could never again bend its neck in subjection to the yoke of a conq-

*Bhikshuki* and *Karuna* he dealt with the agony of community which had for generations suffered from prejudices. His another poem *Duravastha* deals with the life of a Brahmin woman who during Moplah uprising of 1921-22 had lost her home and relatives and had married an untouchable. [*Sunday Standard*, magazine section, 14 January 1973, p. vii].

16. His vision of Motherland was confined to Bengal only.

neror."<sup>17</sup> The song subsequently became the national anthem of the Indian National Congress, and its title the national slogan. But, unfortunately, it is also a fact that *Vande Matram* was couched in such Sanskritized language that to non-Hindus, particularly to Muslims, it smacked not only metaphysical obscurantism but also communalism. It failed to evoke and enthuse the necessary amount of reciprocity in an average Muslim.<sup>18</sup>

Though the primary object of Bankim Chandra and similar other writers was the overthrow of British rule due to their genuine love for the country and anguish for her deteriorated conditions, yet the terminology they used, was communal and sectarian.<sup>19</sup> In *Anand Math*, the birthpangs of the song *Vande Matram* is evidently communal where it is sung by the Hindu *sanyasis* supposed to be struggling against Muslim despotism supported by British military power. The theme was drawn from an actual historical incident occurring in the days of Warren Hastings.<sup>20</sup> In the years to follow the novel became political Bible of the most reactionary body *Rashtriya Swayam Sewak Sangh*. However sincere Bankim or for that matter other writers—both among Hindus and Muslims—might have been in their motives, but their writings led to the growth of misunderstanding between the two communities of India.

17. Sri Aurobindo, *Bankim-Tilak—Dayanda* (Calcutta, Second edition 1947), p. 13.

18. In his recent study A.K. Majumdar also alleges that Bankim wrote several historical novels depicting the Rajput princes as the "flowers of chivalry and the Muslims with one exception, as discomfited villains." These novels were translated in most of Indian languages and their effects can be imagined. *Advent of Independence* (Bombay, 1963) p. 41.

19. For instance see Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyaya, translated into Hindi by Rupnarain Pande, *Anand Math* (Lucknow, 1958 ed.) pp 31, 84, 99, 100, 103 and 105.

20. For further studies see A. L. Carhill, *The Lost Dominion* (London, 1924), pp. 200—01.

But in Nazrul Islam Indians discovered a writer who served their requirements effectively. In *Vidrohi* and other writings Nazrul tried to elaborate an ideal in which the two major communities should submerge the aggressive part of their individuality to build up a greater India. Being a Muslim he used the terms like '*Pralayaullas*', '*Raktmukhi Man*', '*Dhum Ketu*', '*Ranbheri*', '*Natraj*', '*Tandava Nritya*', '*Dhurjati*', '*Pinakoani*', popularly used by the Hindus in their various vernacular languages—both written and spoken. Every politically-conscious Hindu appeared to be ready to embrace him, when he said, "The god Rudra—the mark of royalty—is on my forehead." <sup>21</sup> His other poems like "*Kamalpasha*" and "*Ranbheri*" appealed to both Hindus and Muslims alike. In his joy to create a new order he pledged to destroy the enslaved one :

Though I am tired warrior, but I shall rest on that day alone, when the shrieks of the oppressed will echo no more in the sky and air. And the oppressor's weapons will rattle no more in the fierce battlefield. I am the eternal rebellious hero. I have stood erect and alone have been defying the world power. I am terror of the rulers.<sup>22</sup>

Striking a note so discordant with Tagore the author compared the strength of his hero with the destructive weapons like torpedo and explosive mine or the natural devastations like the untimely storm and pestilence. He considered him no less than *Natraj* of the day of desolation or Chenghiz Khan, the terror of history.

The immediate result of such secular zeal was that it fascinated the young and the old alike in both the communities. It stirred up their imagination, pride and confidence; roused a new consciousness of reality and inspired them to act. And in

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21. *Agni Vina* (Calcutta, D. M. Library, 1951), p. 5.

22. *Ibid*, pp. 6 and 11.



return they applauded Nazrul publicly like Tagore. Tagore himself offered his blessings to Nazrul in a poem published in the journal *Dhumketu* started by the latter. Besides, Tagore himself acknowledged the new consciousness created by Nazrul and expressed his admiration to him by dedicating his drama, the *Basanta* to Nazrul. Nazrul's poetry also provided a new impetus to the literature. "Into a garden lulled by the sweet music of Tagore, Nazrul burst like a trumpet-blast. His style was full of life and his verse moved with a masculine gait", comments a historian of Bengali literature <sup>23</sup>

The period was tense with political fervour—both in the Khilafat and the Congress movements, and not only Nazrul Islam but his disciples also tried to provide impetus to the new political movements by reciting *Vidrohi* on public platform on innumerable occasions. The new atmosphere easily inspired Nazrul Islam's imagination and set him to composing heroic songs and verses which became immediately popular. In almost overnight Nazrul Islam became an all-Bengal poet and subsequently an all-India one. In his compositions he appeared to be tremendously moved by the Swadeshi Movement of 1906-08, particularly the brave deeds of the young revolutionaries. His so-called seditious writings led to his imprisonment, where he fasted for more than a month. Within a short span of time, he became an unignorable force in the struggle for freedom, his chief instrument being his songs and verses which spoke of an uncompromising opposition to tyranny, injustice, misery, distress and oppression in every shape, and assertion of the dignity of man. He gained fame as a people's poet *par excellence*.

Three years after the appearance of *Vidrohi*, in 1924 Sharat Chandra Chatterji wrote his famous novel *Pather Davi* reflecting the same revolutionary spirit of Nazrul Islam still more

23. Enamul Haq, *Muslim Bengali Literature* (Karachi, 1957) p.211.

clearly when he preached the open defiance of British. Though all the characters in the novel were Hindus, yet they were portrayed free from all sorts of sectarianism and communalism like the young contemporary revolutionaries engaged in the political sphere. No other book in Bengali could match *Pather Dabi* of which the first edition of three thousand copies was sold before it could reach the shops of the booksellers. Within a month of its publication the book was being sold in the market at double of its original price.<sup>24</sup> It was proscribed a few months after its publication by the provincial government. A little earlier, Gandhiji's two proscribed books *Hind Swaraj* and *Sarvodaya*, were also sold on a large scale.

Hindi appeared to be taking a lead over all other sister literatures when its poets like Subhadra Kumari Chauhan captured the imagination of the younger generation by glorifying the chivalry of *Jhansi ki Rani*, (the Indian Joan of Arc) who led the First War of Independence against the British regime in 1857. While the powerful verse stirred the whole Hindi-speaking region and became a marching song of the young freedom-fighters, the theme presented to Indians a secular zeal by embellishing the bravery of the queen and her Muslim commander-in-chief struggling against a common adversary.<sup>25</sup> Equally stirring and appealing was the theme presented by the prolific writer Maithili Sharan Gupta in his translation from Bengali, *Plassey ka Yudh* (Battle of Plassey). Appraising the poet's role a historian of Hindi literature writes:

To Maithilisan goes the credit of having roused Indian youth from apathy. His song touched the heart of youngmen, awakened in them the pride of achievement and nostalgia for the age of legendry valour. His was a

24. P.C. Ray, *Life and Times of C R. Das* (Oxford, 1927) p. 172. See also *1921 Movement; Reminiscences*, (New Delhi), p. 60.

25. In Marathi S.G. Gupte wrote the drama of a similar nature. In Malayalam this requirement was fulfilled by the appearance of the famous historical novel *Kerala Simham* by K.M Panikkar.

voice of protest and his is the one voice that has remained most consistently protestant throughout the period he had been writing....He has not yelled defiance, but has never shirked a blow, never sought to escape.<sup>26</sup>

In Marathi literature, Mama Varerkar, a senior and prolific writer, translated the *Pather Davi*. Varerkar's own novels dealt with the oppressed and the down-trodden with a revolutionary socialistic bias. His character had taken a new life from the novelist, in being bold and assertive to change the existing unbearable order.<sup>27</sup>

Likewise, the revolutionary politics found scope in the writings of an Assamese poet, Ambikagiri Roy Chaudhari in 1920-21. Like others he was incarcerated for participating in the movement for national liberation. From the jail he emerged as a rebel and a revolutionary. He aimed not merely at the liberation of his country from the foreign domination but also to liquidate the communalism, inequality, hatred, meanness and selfishness that hindered the progress of secular nationalism. This became the mission of his life. In his poems, '*Mai Viplavi, Mai Tandavi*' (I am a rebel, and a Nihilist) the poet preached revolution and charged hollowness and hypocrisy:

Lust for status and power  
Has swallowed up man's humanity,

26. K.B. Jindal, n.3, p. 281. With the inauguration of the Non-Co-operation Movement the impact of Gandhism on the writings of Maithili Sharan Gupta and his brother Siyaram Sharan Gupta is clearly visible.
27. The other writings in Marathi connected with this trend of violence were the plays like the *Kaliyugatil Parasaram* (1920) by Karandikar; the *Jugari Jag* (1921) by V.G. Satye; the *Bhavani Talvar* and *Sangit Svarajya Sundari* by Anant Hari Gadre; *Svarajya Ce Toran* (1924) by H.K. Kulkarni; the novels like *Bharatiya Sangram* (1924) by G.R. Sane and *Ranadundubhi* (1927) by V.G. Joshi. Still another significant political novel *Muktama* was written by Madholkar. But his work lacked in a consistent or positive political ideology.

Soul's hunger has been tremped under foot....  
 They have maddened man.  
 Sense of duty has been drowned  
 By shouts of rights.  
 I shall come there to do revolution,  
 And shatter these to pieces.<sup>28</sup>

In his collection *Anubhuti* (feelings) there are a number of poems exhorting people to cast off reactionary order. His other later-day poems are a relentless attack on the numerous forms of sectarianism and casteism. They are permeated with robust patriotism and strong note of rebellion. The poem '*Jivan Kihak Kai*' depicted life as one of stress and storm. In his view life fulfilled itself not in an idle pursuit of an empty world of arts or restfulness but in a ceaseless process of untiring actions for the common welfare of all. According to him it was the fire that "reduced to ashes" the errors, blunders and the rotten refuge of things and produced a new "rhyme of indefatigable industries, over the debris of sloth and disintegrated core of things."<sup>29</sup>

But much closer to the line of Bengali revolutionary poet Nazrul Islam, was Binandachandra Barua in Assamese literature. Most of the poems of his two collections—the *Samkhadhvani* and *Pratidhvani* (The Echoes)—advocated the revitalization of national life on militant lines. Exhorting the youth of the country, to whom he considered the instruments of power, he said:

Let hot blood race through your veins  
 Let you dazzle the whole world

28. Translation by the courtesy of Birinchi Kumar Barua, a renowned Assamese litterateur.

29. *Ibid*

Shake up the earth like the thunder-bolt  
And like the rays of the sun.<sup>30</sup>

Still another revolutionary Assamese poet of the class of Nazrul Islam is Parsanalal Chaudhary. His poetry glorified patriotism and excited the people to rebel and rebuild so that the spirit of man might function independently in his country. His collection—the *Agnimantra* (Fiery Songs) bore the significant title expressive of the idealism of the poet who was a rebel against everything that was ugly and sordid.

A new trend which the *litterateurs* of this category tried to develop as a corollary of the trend of violence, was to develop collaboration (of the forces trying to destroy the existing order) on international level, particularly in Eurasia. These writers appeared to have been moved with the ideal that the oppressed people all over Eurasia should unite against their oppressors whether domestic or alien. In their united struggle if they succeeded the future was theirs. If they succumbed, their sacrifice of life would inspire posterity to struggle with more vigour until it got success in its mission. Motivated with such aspirations there appeared the stories like *Vyathar Dana*<sup>31</sup> within a year after the October Revolution in Russia. The hero of the story, Saiful Muluk, joined the Red Army which was much pleased to get an alien in its ranks. Its soldiers were convinced that the great ideal of international unity of the oppressed was gaining ground among the people all over the world. In accepting Saiful Muluk as partisan they were shown to have been inspired by the desire to fight out tyranny exercised over humanity. The hero of the story also felt proud to be one of the members of this inspiring organization. In the ranks of the Red Army he fought vigorously against the oppressors of the Russian people. Similarly in his poem

30. *Ibid.*

31. For further study see Nazrul Islam, *Vyathar Dana and Other Stories* (Calcutta, 1322—Indian Year), pp 1-23.

*Ranbheri*, Nazrul Islam proposed the depatch of 10,000 Indian soldiers to assist Kamal Atatürk in the Greco-Turkish War. In his novel *Pather Dabi* Sharat too showed the main character Dr. Sabya Sachi attempting to collaborate with revolutionary leaders of Japan, China and other countries of East Asia, to eradicate alien aggression from the continent.

### **Trend of Non-Violence**

Basically opposed to the trend of violence many a writer developed the trend of non-violent non-co-operation in Indian literature. Unlike the adherents of violent trend they believed in power of self-reliance. For instance, the participants from Orissa in the Gandhian movement were kept inspired by the songs of Birakishore Das and Banchhanidhi Mohanty, both Gandhian followers. In the years to follow a mass of poetry was produced in Oirya on the personality of Gandhiji. The verse *Kamalayan* by Mayadhar Mansinha comes within this category. Among others who tried to popularize the Gandhian movement, most notable is Hare Kurshna Mahtab who wrote a number of novels in this connection.

The same devotion to Gandhism is reflected in the Hindi literature belonging to the later part of the "Dwivedi" era when patriotic verse ceased to be propagandistic. The expression of emotion and zeal in it is nothing but an echo of the national sentiment of the age. The bitter feeling against alien rule had begun to manifest. The voice of the struggle against servitude and oppression was most predominant in these poems getting impetus from the Non-Co-operation Movement. In the contributions of Makhanlal Chaturvedi, Balkrishna Sharma Navin, etc. popular emotions of demonstration against British rule were raised. And as suppression was forced upon the people they expressed still more vociferously. Their verse is a strong manifestation of the national fervour.

A similar spirit is reflected in Prem Chand's famous story *Samar-yatra* where the old lady "Nohari" assists the

Congress *Satyagrahis* like the "Mother" by Gorky. But the real influence of Gandhian philosophy on Prem Chand is reflected in his novel *Seva-Sadan* which presented him in the role of a social reformer. Fixing him in the historical perspective may help the reader to appreciate the significance of his role. With a slight difference from his predecessors Gandhiji was also a reformist so far as his activities in the domestic sphere were concerned. He appeared to be interested more in obtaining *Swaraj* than altering the feudal structure of the society. Even if he wanted to change it, he believed in class assimilation when the feudal lords would act like the trustees of the poor. He scorned the treachery of the British and looked back with nostalgic delight to the ancient India of *Ram Rajya*—Britishless, immaculate and a paradise of milk and honey. Somewhat similar approach towards the society was reflected in the reformist and humanist of Prem Shankar in *Seva Sadan*.

In 1920 the non-violence movement was started. Gandhiji paid a visit to Gorakhpur and addressed a huge public meeting. Prem Chand, who also attended the meeting, was stirred. Gandhiji appeared to him some sort of remarkable tonic for the ills of the country. He resigned the lucrative Government job he had been holding for twenty years. Inspired by the new political movement he wrote the story "The Red Ribbon", got it published in *Zamana* magazine in July 1921. He depicted the chief character of the story, *Hari Bilas*, showing frustration and disappointment for obeying blindly the orders of his superiors, which were not always the instruments of perfect justice. Hence Hari Bilas decided to break away from his Government post.

But the sudden postponement of the Non-Co-operation Movement perhaps disappointed Prem Chand. To him both the *Satyagrah* and non-violence appeared to have failed to abolish tyranny and exploitation perpetuated not only by the British rule but also by landlords. And from then onwards Prem Chand found it impossible to stick to convention and abide by the morals of the old traditional society preaching fatalism indicated in the

inevitability of misery and poverty for the haves-not. His decision to search and apply another cure was largely determined by the success of the October Revolution in Russia. Though the Revolution had taken place in the last quarter of 1917, yet it took long time in those days to get the correct news of the upheavals because the instruments of information were still controlled by the privileged classes and British Government. Moreover, the Revolution could stabilize itself only after the civil war was brought to an end in 1920-21. By the time correct information about the October Revolution had begun to influence Prem Chand's mind, Gandhiji had inaugurated the Non-Cooperation Movement. An event occurring just in front of him appeared to have subdued and yet not totally, the effect of a faraway incident on his mind.

Anyhow, the philosophy of the October Revolution was uppermost in his mind by now after the sudden and sad debacle of the Non-Co-operation. The new spirit was reflected in *Premashram* published in 1922. Balraj, one of the prominent characters in the novel, was shown reading newspapers and taking the side of the villagers against the oppressive government servants, and above all, exhorting the former not to be afraid of the latter because the workers and peasants had established their own rule in Russia. Prem Chand indicated that he hoped for a similar uprising in India, and looked forward to a vision of satisfied, and unexploited free community.<sup>32</sup> He symbolized this community in the village of Lakhanpur, appearing towards the end of the novel.

The theme of militant nationalism continued to attract Prem Chand. The hardships of Indian masses made him more and more outspoken. In fact, by "portraying their anguish he had "given tongue to the 'dumb, driven cattle' and invested them with a halo and greatness."<sup>33</sup> In another novel *Karma-*

32. Prem Chand, *Premashram* (Allahabad, 1958) pp. 433-48.

33. Khwaja Ahmad Farooqi, 'Urdu', Nagendra, ed., *Indian Literature* n. 10, p. 589.



*Bhumi* not only he disapproved the maintenance of the law-courts, government offices and large number of clerks (whom he compared with a pack of jackals around the slowly dying poor), but also exhorted through his characters to destroy them and rebuild a new classless order.

It may also be pointed out that it was not simply the incident of the October Revolution, rather the philosophy of Marxism which began to attract his thinking gradually. It is very interesting to note that the aging Tolstoy was becoming the God-fearing saint, whereas the aging Prem Chand was turning more and more radical and rational in his thinking and away from his belief in God. It is also not out of place to mention here that he was the early guiding force for progressive literature in India. Sajjad Zahir has paid glowing tribute to Prem Chand's work *Roshnai*, which is an account of the history of the progressive literature in Urdu.

Inference should not, however, be drawn from this that Prem Chand became totally indifferent towards the struggle for national liberation launched under the leadership of Gandhiji. In 1929 he published *Samar-Yatra*, another collection of short stories, in which he sought to depict and advance the Civil Disobedience Movement. The new collection was interpreted by the authorities to be a force of greater potential subversion than his early writing, *Sauz-e-Vatan* in 1909. A ban was imposed on it almost as soon as it was published.

This queer blend of Marxism and Gandhism in Prem Chand influenced the thinking of a large number of his contemporaries who were incidentally associated with the national movement. Perhaps it will not be irrelevant to state that if anyone properly tries to analyze or scrutinize the present programme of the Indian National Congress, which is the blend of the Gandhian concepts and Nehru's socialism, its objectives in rudimentary form can be traced in the writings of Prem Chand.

It was, above all, in Gujarati literature that the doctrine of Non-Co-operation found its best expression. Mahatma Gandhi, the architect of the doctrine, was a forceful writer in his mother tongue—Gujarati. The fresh addition of his *Hind Swaraj* was printed by Kaka Kalelkar. In defiance of the Rowlatt Act Kaka Kalelkar and Omar Sobhani sold the copies openly in the streets of Bombay. And “they were sold like hot *bhajiya*s and at fancy prices.”<sup>34</sup> Gandhiji also wrote and published *Dakshina Africana Satyagrah-no Itihas* and his own autobiography *The Story of My Experiments With Truth* in two volumes in 1927 and 1929, respectively. To make it available to the poorest reader the book was priced at Re.I/ and had run through five editions, nearly 50,000 copies having been sold by 1940.<sup>35</sup> As the writing style of Gandhiji had been conspicuous for its simplicity and directness, terse and to the point, and a model of clarity, and fully expressive of his cherished ideals, the book became very popular in Gujarati-speaking regions. Quickly it was translated into other regional languages too. Besides, Mahatma Gandhi also wrote innumerable series of articles, notes and letters in Gujarati. They roused men to action on account of their sincerity and earnestness. The *Navajivan* was also started in 1919 and carried practically to every home. Among Gandhiji’s personal followers Mahadev Desai, Kishori Lal Mashruvala and Kaka Saheb Kalelkar also popularized his ideology through their writings like *The Gospel of Swadeshi* and *Loka-mata*. The other writers like Narhari Parikh, Maganbhai Desai also produced works of similar nature. The Gujarat Vidyapith also did valuable political service to the cause by publishing a number of pamphlets and books on the subject. But it was left to Nanalal Dalpatram to eulogize the services of Gandhiji. Enquiring about him the poet asks:

34. Kaka Kalelkar, *Stray Glimpses of Bapu* (Ahmedabad, 1950), p. 38.

35. See the Translator’s preface, M.K. Gandhi, *An Autobiography or The Story of My Experiments With Truth* (Ahmedabad, 1936), p. III.

And who he is—such a one?  
 Like one who goes hungry for humanity,  
 Like one who goes thirsty for all,  
 Like one who holds a perpetual fast:  
 Who is he — such a one?  
 Revered of the people, adored by all?<sup>36</sup>

Introducing him to the audience the poet says:

He is the ascetic of the high banks of the Sabharmati.....  
 Aflame at knowledge of grief of others,  
 He is a descendant of great *Vaishnavas*.....  
 In his heart blazeth up a conflagration,  
 His eyes are aglow like live embers,  
 On his face sit shades of sorrow:  
 The creeper of his body is arched scaringly  
 By burning love for his country.<sup>37</sup>

Exhorting his countrymen to celebrate his fiftieth birthday in all festivity he says:

Let fifty lamp-wreaths be lit in temples,  
 Let fifty *Artis* be performed,  
 Let fifty temple bells ring out:  
 Today is the festival, of fifty years.<sup>38</sup>

Satyendranath Datta had earned much reputation for translating into Bengali the Vedic hymns and classical Sanskrit verses, and for writing the plays like *Dhunar Dhomyay* (dealing with the life of King Dashrath). He welcomed the

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36. Nanalal Dalpatram Kavi, *The Ascetic of Gujarat* (Ahmedabad, 1960) pp. 5—6.

37. *Ibid*, p. 6.

38. *Ibid*, p. 5.

Gandhian movement with enthusiasm, and his poetry was the first in Indian literature to be vocal in its praise.<sup>39</sup> At the very first expression of enthusiasm all that had been done by the British appeared bad, and sympathy for the labouring class gained a new importance. So Datta wrote his *Charkar Gan* (the Song of the *Charkha*).

The influence of Mahatma Gandhi on the thought and politics of Kannada literature is also to be recognized as one of the major forces. Gifted poets like V. Sitaramia, P.T.N. Rajaratnam and others wrote verse 'redolent of the soil and of stirring age of resurgent nationalism in which they lived.'<sup>40</sup> "Dreaming of *Swaraj* within a year, they felt that the entire old world they saw would be swept out of existence and a new *Rama Rajya* would be established in its place. To break and to break with the past is the first characteristic of the younger poets in Karnatak in those early days",<sup>41</sup> observes an expert of the Kannada literature. Likewise, in Malayalam Vallathol, popularly known as 'Tagore of Kerala', composed songs about Gandhiji and his philosophy like 'Ente Gurunadhan' (My Teacher). In fact, it was he who introduced Gandhian philosophy to Malayalam literature. For over a period of a decade his poetic genius composed poems after poems charged with national emotion and sentiment. They touched every subject of national significance. Influenced by his writings others wrote about the Vaikom Satyagraha, a movement launched for the entry of untouchables to the temples forbidden to them. Thus through his language he gave a great momentum to the spirit of nationalism. During his visit to India in 1921 the Prince of Wales wanted to award *Veer Shrankhla*

39. Sukumar Sen, *History of Bengali Literature* (New Delhi, 1960) p. 337.

40. V K. Gokak, "Kannad Literature," *Contemporary Indian Literature* (New Delhi, Sahitya Akademi, 1957); p. 99.

41. Adya Rangacharya, "Kannada", Dr. Nagendra, ed., *Indian Literature*, n. 10, p. 171.

to the poet. But he politically refused to accept it from the representative of an imperialist power which had enslaved his country. Due to the Moplah rebellion, the people, particularly Hindus, had begun to dislike the Congress. T.R. Krishnaswamy Iyer started the daily newspaper *Yuvabharat* with a view to acquaint the people with the real motives of the nationalist movement.

In Tamilnadu, Subrahmanya Bharati gave to his people a series of very powerful songs on national movement. As his earlier songs on nationalism embraced the whole of India—the conception of *Bharat Mata* established by Bengal patriots at the beginning of this century—his longer poem like the *Kannan Pattu* (23 mystic and devotional songs to Lord Krishna) and *Pancali Saptam* (the oath of Panchali, i.e., Draupadi, the heroine of *Mahabharata*) in two parts, published in 1924, led to glorification of these two historical figures as much a cultural inheritance of north as that of south. Moreover, his songs on Gandhiji and other writings related to Non-Co-operation too were one of the greatest forces for the emotional integration of the Tamilnadu with the rest of India. For this singular service he has been called the most eminent poet of Indian nationalism. On his being imprisoned for supporting the national insurgence to defy the foreign rule, he had once sung:

Though torn away from the warmth of home,

In prison-cell I pine,

Though rank and wealth do fade and leave

Reproaches only mine,

Though griefs on griefs crowd without end

And shake and shatter me,

Dear goddess Freedom, never would I

Forget to bow to thee...

Goddess, could it be called a land

The land bereft of thy light ?<sup>42</sup>

Contemporaneous with Bharati was Ramalingam Pillai. His verses in *Sankoli* (The sound of the Conchshell Trumpet) and his verse-novel *Avanum Avalum* (He and She) are very popular works. Being a follower of Mahatma Gandhi he was bound to say about the leader and his ideology in his writings.

In Assamese language too, some literary writings on Gandhiji's movement were produced. Noteworthy among them were the pamphlets like the *Swaraj* by Purnakanta Gogoi and *Mahatma Gandhir Kabita* by Chandranath Das. Very soon these writings were proscribed by the British Government by bringing into operation the Press Act, 1910.

Due to their interest in the Khilafat movement the overwhelming majority of the Muslims with minor exceptions like Jinnah and others, gave their full support to the Ghandhian movement. More than any other Muslim leader, despite being youngest of them all, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, was a tower of strength to Gandhiji. With his vast knowledge, remarkable power of eloquence and persuasion and modern outlook he was one of the topmost Urdu writers. Relating to Mahadev Desai his first meeting with Gandhiji on 18 January, 1920, and acceptance of the Non-Co-operation he told, "Gandhiji placed before us a detailed programme, and I had no difficulty in agreeing with him in every detail. It was quite clear to me, that there was no other effective or correct line of action than this."<sup>43</sup> When actually the movement started, in a written statement issued on 8 December, 1921, he exhorted his co-religionists to remember the basic

42. *The Voice of a Poet* : Being English renderings from the Tamil originals of poems by Subramania Bharati (Calcutta, Bharati Tamil Sangh, 1951), p. 10.

43. Mahadev Desai, *Maulana Abul Kalam Azad* (Agra, 1945) p. 27.

precepts of Islam and to take lead in this movement of trial over all their Indian brethren.<sup>44</sup> For his active association with the preparation being made for the Non-Co-operators at Calcutta to boycott the Prince of Wales the Maulana was arrested and put on trial. He prepared a statement in Urdu bearing on the situation. It was unique among all the statements made by *Satyagrahi* prisoners. It is generally famous today as the *Qaul-i-Faisal* or the "Final Verdict". Gandhiji hailed it as "an eloquent thesis expressing the Maulana's views on nationalism"<sup>45</sup> Above all the *Qaul-i-Faisal* is not only a historical document, it is one of the most outstanding pieces of literature. It revealed the Maulana's determination to suffer for the motherland. It would not, therefore, be out of context to quote a passage in which he proudly claimed to belong to the long line of *Satyagrahis* from Jesus and Socrates downwards who suffered for adherence to truth. Continuing his philosophical statement he took responsibility for organizing the anti-British agitation of non-violence:

Like good, evil also desires to live in this world and struggle for its own existence. In India also such a struggle for the survival of the fittest has already commenced. Most certainly, therefore, nothing can be a higher crime against the domination of Government, as at present established, than the agitation which seeks to terminate its unlimited authority in the name of liberty and justice. I fully admit that I am not only guilty of such agitation, but that I belong to that band of pioneers who originally sowed the seed of such agitation in the heart of our nation and dedicated their whole lives to the cherishing and breeding of this holy discontent.<sup>46</sup>

44. Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, *Qaul-i-Faisal* (Delhi, 1963), p. 29.

45. The statement has been quoted by the Private Secretary of Gandhiji Mahadev Desai, *Maulana Abul Kalam Azad*, n. 43, p. 31.

46. Translation by Mahadev Desai, *Qaul-i-Faisal*, p. 67.

Among other Urdu *litterateurs* there was a staunch nationalist Akbar Hussain Razvi Allahabadi. Through his most remarkable and appealing humorous expression he admired Gandhiji and his contribution to the cause of nationalism. But the most glowing tribute was paid to Gandhiji and his movement by Mrs. Sarojini Naidu, one of the topmost Indian writers in English, in one of her eloquent pieces of literature:

Only the other day we are saying "Behold ! liberity is at hand"...Out of South Africa there came a wizard across the seas. We said: "Here comes the magician...here comes the great sorcerer and by some magic he shall teach us deliverance from bondage" and throughout the length and breadth of this great sorrowing country went the magic fire—that was called "Non-Co-operation"...Whatever may be the verdict of history, it cannot be gainsaid that the movement of non-violent non-co-operation that swept like a tempest over the country shook the very foundations of our national life, and though today it is quiescent and its echoes are almost still, it has irrevocably changed the aspect of our spiritual landscape.<sup>47</sup>

The lead that the writings of Mrs. Naidu gave the country was that of a poet-patriot. She concluded with the following memorable passage:

I am not afraid of the ultimate sacrifice....Oh, my men, stand up and say what is manhood but sacrifice, what is life except to die that our children may be reborn in their heritage of freedom....Let me.. say: "Mother, rise we redeem you from bondage, rise from the nightmare of slavery."<sup>48</sup>

47. Extract from the extempore as well as written presidential addresses delivered by Mrs. Naidu at the Kanpur session of the Indian National Congress in 1925; *Congress Presidential Addresses; 1919 to 1934* (Madras, G.A. Natesan & Co., 1934), pp. 759 & 774.

48. *Ibid*, p. 771.



## B—EDUCATION REFORM MOVEMENT

*The real teaching is a gift, it is not a manufactured article of routine work....Let us not insult our mission by allowing ourselves to become mere school masters, the dead feeding-bottles of lessons for children who need human touch lovingly associated with their mental good.*

*[An extract from the text of a letter written by Rabindranath Tagore from Paris on 21 August 1920, Modern Review (Calcutta), November 1921, Vol.XXX,p.553].*

X X X

### Conditions in 1920-21

The alien Government had not taken much interest in the improvement of the educational system and the spreading of literacy despite the repeated demand of the nationalists. Out of 247 million people of British India only 8.38 million were enrolled for education. It meant that all but 3.39 per cent of this vast population was still illiterate in modern education.<sup>1</sup> Even education provided to this small minority of children contained many omissions. An interesting analogy to the educational position in the country in those days, can be drawn from certain references taken from the writings of Dr. Heng Chieh Tao, a Chinese scholar. Writing in a picturesque manner about the educational conditions in China in the thirties (when People's Education Movement was organized

1. *India in 1922-23* (Calcutta, Government of India, 1923), p. 233.

to improve the system) the author wrote that a false conception of education, with centuries of tradition behind it, was hampering progress. Education in the old sense had been identified with book-reading. A scholar was called a "dushuren" denoting one who reads books. The author added that while he admitted and valued books as a significant source of enlightening people in ancient and modern times, he doubted whether reading books alone could pave the way to freedom and whether one had done justice to books by merely reading them. In more advanced circles such scholars were nicknamed as "book-worms". One of the author's friends, Dr. P.C. Chang, called them "scholar ghosts". The author himself composed a little poem which portrayed such scholars:

What is a scholar ghost ?...

He has bookish knowledge to boast.

He has his eyes on the official post.

He likes delicious food,

And makes the half-starved farmers to be his hosts

When jobless, he teaches children,

And makes all of them little scholar ghosts.

Under the sub-heading *Hands and Brains Unite*, the author added that the traditional education in his country appeared to have produced two kinds of peculiar human beings. In the schools the students were "fed with knowledge to swell their heads" and teachers were doing many things for them that should be done by themselves. The manufacturing of a mud pie and the opening of a watch for test were considered punishable alike. From the growth of the human race it was understood that it was man's hands that assisted to make the brain. As his hands were set free by the erected position he began to effort, and as he was working he made noises that were gradually selected to serve as his spoken language. The written languages and tools were all the creations of his hands. The discouragement of the use of

hand in the older schools led to amassing of undigested and unrelated knowledge without the ability to identify it with realities. Elaborating his standpoint the author added that those who had thus the opportunity of schooling “come out with a big head and a pair of small hands, in figurative speech, looking somewhat like a Kangaroo”, having only the strength to pick up a pen and write a few lines. On the other side, the large number of the masses, doing the great bulk of work for the country, had no school education.<sup>2</sup> While they were paying taxes for schools to run, they and their children had been deprived of every opportunity for cultural development. They had been forced to exist with “a small head and a pair of big hands.”<sup>3</sup>

- 2 One of the most serious charges against the system of education in India too was that it did neither social nor regional justice; that it favoured the urban population at the cost of the rural; that primary education was not looked after so well as the higher. This was substantiated by Mr. Sharp in the *Quinquennial Review* in 1922. He established that education in India was top-heavy and that mass education was, relatively speaking, far less developed than the higher. Relatively speaking, the State incurred expenses far more on higher than on lower education. Complaining similarly Professor F L. Vaswani stated in October 1928:

Current education has, in some measure, sharpened the intellect. But a sharpened intellect that divides us from the village-folk and helps us to trample upon the divinity of the poor and, at best, teaches us wordy ‘patriotism’—surely, is not a thing to be proud of.

*Indian Quarterly Register*, July-December, 1928 (Calcutta) Part II, p.467. See also Rabindra Nath Tagore, *Lectures and Addresses* (London, 1950), pp. 19-21 & 40-1.

- 3 Somewhat similar was the condition of the masses in India. Feeling pity over them Gandhiji had remarked in *Harijan* on 8 May 1937, ‘From their mind and soul, they have sunk to the level of the beast. Life to them is a sorry bungle which they muddle through anyhow. On the other hand, what goes on by the name of education in our schools and colleges in the cities today is in reality only intellectual dissipation. It does not correspond to the requirements of pauper India. The slightest physical exertion gives the young

(Footnote contd.)

The Life Education Movement aimed at the restoration of both these strange human beings to normal life. Its aim was to awaken the scholars to stretch their hand to work and the masses "to blow something into their heads" in order to think. What was required was an education for "brain-directed hands and hand-motorised brain." This new ideal of education got reflected in the following verse:

Two treasures with us life long remain :  
 A pair of free hands and a great brain.  
 He who does not use his hand,  
 Belongs to the dethroned King's band.  
 He who does not use his brain  
 Has to endure hunger and pain.  
 He who uses both his brain and hand  
 Can create a new world on exploited land.<sup>4</sup>

Somewhat similar necessity was being felt in India to build up a new nation. But the alien rule was the greatest obstruction to the attainment of this ideal. So there prevailed widespread antagonism against English education.<sup>5</sup> Gandhiji forcefully attacked the system which, it was suggested, the British had wickedly introduced in the country. India's indigenous system of mass education, which existed for centuries, was destroyed by the British. In reply to a question put to him in a public

(previous footnote contd.)

man who emerges from this system, headache; a mild exposure to the sun is enough to cause him giddiness." Anand T. Hingorani, ed., *To the Students* (Allahabad, 1941) pp. 32, 133. See also Rabindra Nath Tagore, n. 2, pp. 19-21, & 40-1.<sup>6</sup>

4. "The People's Education Movement," *Harijan*, 29 October 1938 (Poona) pp. 310-11.
5. For further study see the resolutions passed and speeches delivered at the thirty-seventh session of the Indian National Congress held at Gaya in 1922 (Patna, 1923) pp. 119-20. Also see *Report of the Thirtieth Session held at Belgaum in 1924*, p. 115.

meeting on 13 April 1912 at Cuttack, whether English education was not a mixed evil in as much as Lokmanya Tilak, Raja Ram Mohan Roy and he himself were products of British education, Gandhiji said that this was a wilful ignorance and prejudice of his countrymen. Leaving aside his case as he was a "miserable pigmy", Gandhiji further contended that both Tilak and Roy would have been far greater men if they had not the "contagion of English learning". Despite so many resources at their disposal, both of them were so many pigmies who held no sway upon the people compared with Chaitanya, Shankar, Kabir, Nanak and Tulsidas, the giants of Indian culture and civilization. What Shankaracharya alone was able to achieve, the entire population of English-knowing Indians could not do. Was there a single English educated Indian who was a match to Nanak? Could Ram Mohan Roy produce a single martyr like Dulip Singh? It was Gandhiji's firm conviction that if both Roy and Tilak had not received this education but had got their natural training, they would have done greater things like Chaitanya and others. The outward glamour of English education had kept the contemporary intelligentsia so much spellbound that they had forgotten that this education had emasculated them, constrained their intellect, and the technique of imparting it had rendered them effeminate. No country could become a nation by producing a race of translators.<sup>6</sup> Pre-British days were not totally an age of slavery. People enjoyed some kind of *Swaraj* under Mughal rule. In Akbar's rule the birth of a Rana Pratap was possible, and even under Aurangzeb's tyranny a Shivaji could "flourish". Had the British rule of a century and a half brought up any person like them? Could anyone of the English-educated Maharajas brought up from their childhood under the patronage of Western culture, be compared with Shivaji who faced bravely all dangers and shared the simple life of his common people? Were they better rulers than Pratap, the intrepid? Gandhiji compared these specimens

6. *Young India* (1919-20), a collection of writings by Gandhiji and others (Madras, 1922), p 457.

of Western culture with Neros fiddling in London and Paris whilst their Romes were burning? There was nothing to be proud of in their culture which had made them aliens in their own country, and which had led them to prefer to waste extravagantly the hard earnings of their *ryots* and their own "souls" in Europe instead of sharing the sorrows and sufferings of those over whom they were imposed by the British Crown to rule.<sup>7</sup> He concluded that the struggle for freedom would become infinitely more powerful, had it not been hampered by mental slavery. What was the use of education that promoted slavery.<sup>8</sup>

Moreover, the ideals placed before the students were directly or indirectly full of glorification of the British, their exploits in history with special reference to the conquest of India, the protection they afforded, the happiness and security they conferred on this country and what disasters would fall on this country if that protection was withdrawn. The "silly lives of stupid British Kings"<sup>9</sup> were useful knowledge that must be crammed by the youth at the enormous wastage of time, labour and money. But the lives of Indian patriots formed dangerous literature. Patriotic and national songs were proscribed. The achievements of the Indian people were kept in the background and their inferiority was systematically limelighted as created out of inter-communal jealousies, sectional disunion, and dishonesty—due totally to the existence of an inferior civilization which had surrendered at the very first meeting, to the more lively civilization of the European people. In exaggerating the bad side of the Indian character the Black Hole of Calcutta was prominently chronicled in every edition of Indian history

7. Anand T. Hingorani, n. 3, p. 29.

8. Account rendered by Rajendra Prasad, *At the Feet of Mahatma Gandhi* (Asia Publishing House, 1961)p.95. See also *1921 Movement: Reminiscences* (New Delhi, 1971), p. 80.

9. Comment made by Nariman in his presidential address to the third session of the All-India Youth Congress held at Calcutta on 25 December 1928; *Indian Quarterly Register*, July-December 1928 (Calcutta) Vol II, p. 450.

to create an impression that Indians were cruel, treacherous and barbarous and they should not be trusted. But the worst incident of Jallianwalla Bagh, exposing the tyranny and brutality of British bureaucracy, was never referred to in the latest editions.

To those who pointed out the merits of literary training through the English education Gandhiji replied in his address delivered on 21 June, 1928 at the Gujarat Vidyapith. He asked what was its utility if it cramped and confined his countrymen at a critical moment in national life? Knowledge and literary training were no recompense for emasculation.<sup>10</sup> Moreover, this literary training was alleged to be subjected to some sort of political segregation and disinfection of the students, lest they should become influenced by patriotism. All nationalist newspapers and even reviews were banned in Government colleges, hostels, students' common rooms and youngmen's institutions subsidized by State. Only the magazines of pronouncedly 'loyal' tone like *The Statesman* and the *Pioneer* were circulated. It was considered no less than a crime to subscribe for or to possess an issue of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* or the *Bengalee* before Sir Surendra Nath's conversion. Besides, the students were not permitted to listen to the lectures of honest, manly and patriotic teachers, but only to subordinate courtiers like 'Empire-Day' orators and 'Durbarday' poets.

### Boycott of English Education

As a result of this sort of education, the national leaders pointed out, the mental outlook of the people had completely changed. It had broken the continuity of national existence. It had failed to make fit one generation to bear the burden of the previous. It made students "obsequious, indecisive and ballastless."<sup>11</sup> In this manner the alien rule had not only

10. Anand T. Hingorani, n.3, p. 63.

11. Remark by Gandhiji on the occasion of the strike by the students of Gujarat College, Ahmedabad, in January 1929. [*Ibid.*, p. 104]

controlled political activity but intellectual and moral growth also. People judged every thing by European standards. They had become so slavish that they did not even think that there could be other standards as well. So it was pointed out that so long as the people could not get rid of this mental slavery, how could they do away with political slavery. Appeals were made to the self-respect of the Indian student and to his timidity and incompetence as compared to the intrepidity and adventure of the students in the West. The seat of all this evil was considered the school and college which, in the words of Gandhiji, ignored "the culture of the heart and the hand" and confined simply to "the head".<sup>12</sup> It had to be reformed from A to Z. But before that could be achieved, it had to be destroyed. Destruction must precede construction. Exhorting the students to discard without delay irrespective of consequences the 'slave-owning' system, if they felt that it was against their conscience to continue in institutions dominated by a government which the nation had solemnly resolved to bring to an end, Gandhiji stated:

'Fly from this monster'. Never mind if you beg from door to door. Rather die begging than live in bondage. Realise your own dignity even though India was infested with robbers. I refuse to shed a single tear if English retire at this moment... Ours was a non-co-operation with a system which had seized us in its serpentine coil, and which was reducing us to dust.<sup>13</sup>

Exhorting the youth in his speech delivered at the Nagpur Session in support of the Non-Co-operation resolution, Jitendra Nath Banerjee said :

Come forth and read in the book of Nationalism and Freedom...Do not take shelter behind quibbles and camouflages. Off the mask of hypocrisy. When our students

12. *Young India* (1919-22), n.6, p, 386.

13. Anand T. Hingorani, n.3, pp, 15 and 89.



give up their colleges.....they will be recruited as soldiers of the Non-Co-operation Movement. What better mission can they have ? ...Imagine an army of a hundred thousand men inspired with the same purpose, actuated by the same desire, fired with noble enthusiasm. ...Will they not sweep like a resistless flood-tide over the land and before their majestic onrush, will not the last barriers of despotism and tyranny be swept away into the whirlpool of oblivion?<sup>14</sup>

The protest movement developed so rapidly and powerfully that even, a liberal supporter of English education was bold enough to concede that it was incredible how, within a short span of few months, the attacks against the system developed into a "mighty wave" before which old institutions all over the country "tottered".<sup>15</sup> Even the government authorities admitted that Gandhiji and his followers were successful in causing education dislocation to a considerable degree. Wherever Gandhiji went and addressed the student gatherings, there for the moment the ordinary progress of educational routine was seriously interrupted.<sup>16</sup> Some schools were "crippled" beyond the hope of recovery. In some provinces like Bengal the campaign was at its height resulting in the occurrence of school strikes and other similar signs like blockading of the roads leading to the rooms or halls where examinations were conducted, by the strikers lying flat on the ground in front of the doors. For instance, as a result of picketing before the Calcutta University Hall where B.L. candidates were sitting at their examination, only 150 out of 500 candidates could appear.<sup>17</sup> To encourage the strikers at certain places like Calcutta the neighbours distributed oranges among them. This showed

14. *Report of the Thirty-fifth Session of the Indian National Congress held at Nagpur*, pp. 81-2,

15. M.R. Jayakar, *The Story of My Life* (Asia Publishing House, 1958) Vol. II, p. 369.

16. *India in 1921-22* (Calcutta, Government of India, 1922) p. 40.

17. *Indian Annual Register, 1921-22* (Calcutta), Vol. I, p.139.

that the students themselves began to doubt the efficacy of English education. The call to boycott was felt as keenly by the brightest and the most useful students as by the idle and the frustrated. A large number of them boycotted under the impression that they were thereby in some indirect way serving the nation. The power of the appeal was strengthened by very genuine discontent with a course of education which appeared to lead to nothing but the acquisition of a degree, an honour no longer worth the money spent in obtaining it. So their education fitted them for nothing. Obviously they were inclined to hate the system which had rejected them. Moreover, the existing environment of the educational institutions also played some role in making the students to adopt the new course of action. The drabness and joylessness of student life was subjected to the poverty, the cramdrudgery of studies, mechanical drill, prison-like restrictions, routine lectures and dreary surroundings in which a student often found himself housed. It made him moody, depressed and absorbed in himself and his future prospects in life. It was not astonishing, therefore, if in moments of despondency he found pleasure in national liberation struggle. To another class of students the situation appeared to present possibilities of adventure, romance, freedom and excitement that illuminated the colourless existence. Picketing, strikes and processions became as unavoidable to such students as a bump-super and a rag to Oxford undergraduates. "Young men are", admitted the authorities, "dreaming dreams. Imagination had been fired and a spiritual uplift initiated."<sup>18</sup> Something that had long been wanting in their college life had been supplied. Non-Co-operation seemed to have driven away every other idea and method from the field of students' politics. Those were the days of actual revolution. It cannot be conceived in our times how hundreds of youths jumped into the movement, not knowing how, where and when it would end.

18. *Indian Education in 1920-22* (Calcutta, Government of India, 1922), p. 4.

On the contrary, they knew fully well that their life would be relived in a completely different way. Many of them were treated as lost to the family which built high hopes on their career after education. "But the driving force of the movement and of its leader was so great", recalls Hare Krushna Mehtab, former Chief Minister of Orissa, "that the entire process of our thinking was completely metamorphosed. We came out on the streets to work out the revolution.... It did not matter if the days were without food and the nights were sleepless. It did not matter if the roads were thorny or even non-existent."<sup>19</sup> "The entire atmosphere in the country", wrote an Indian who returned from abroad after eight years, "was changed.... I felt like Rip Van Winkle, the hero of a tale by W. Irving, who slept 20 years and when he woke up he found himself in a world much different from the one before he slept.... I saw the people upon their legs.... There was defiance on their faces .... Boys and girls were moving about in batches singing national songs."<sup>20</sup> Igniting their fire of enthusiasm Madan Mohan Malaviya made them remember the atrocities of Jallianwala Bagh and exhorted them to bring to an end the imperialist system. He said at a meeting in Banaras:

We numbered 30 crores, while the Englishmen were a handful. What could they do with an army of ten, twenty or fifty thousand? They had merely mounted on our shoulders; if we only shook our shoulders they would topple down. We had 60 crores of hands. If we meant it, we could cross the seas with our hands and reach England, no one could stop us.<sup>21</sup>

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19. Hare Krushna Mehtab, "Revolution of 1921", *1921 Movement : Reminiscences* (New Delhi, Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1971), p. 136.

20. N.S. Hardiker, "When I felt Like Rip Van Winkle", *1921 Movement : Reminiscences*, n.19, pp. 102-03.

21. Cited by T.N. Singh, former Chief Minister of Uttar Pradesh, "My Reminiscences", *1921 Movement.....*, n. 19, pp. 183-84.

For months together in 1921-22 when the Non-Co-operation campaign was in full force a number of educational institutions lay almost vacant. There was rarely a university in the country from which boys did not withdraw, in larger or smaller numbers. According to the estimations of Arthur Mayhew, Director of Public Instruction in the Central Provinces, in one of the provinces 47,000 students, nearly one-fourth of the total strength, boycotted their respective centres of education between July 1920 and August 1921.<sup>22</sup> In Bengal and Burma, according to the estimation of authorities, nearly 24,000 students had withdrawn by the end of March 1921.<sup>23</sup> In Bihar nearly 250 students had left their studies by the end of 1920.<sup>24</sup> But in June 1922 there were studying nearly 22,000 students<sup>25</sup> in the national schools and colleges. At least half of these students appeared to have left their former institutions. Relying on these estimations if 20,000 is taken an average figure for each province of British India, then nearly two lakhs of students seemed to have boycotted the Government recognized institutions. According to another estimation also this figure appears to be correct. According to the estimation of the Government authorities the total number of students withdrawn from recognized institutions was nearly 45,000<sup>26</sup> up to March 1921, i.e. within three months of the Nagpur Session. The national movement remained in full swing for next one year more nearly i.e. for four academic terms of an educational institution. If the first figure is taken as an average for each academic term then within a year nearly two lakhs of students, it appears, would have withdrawn from the Government recognized institutions. And the percentage of decrease

22. Arthur Mayhew, *The Education of India* (London, 1926), p. 136.

23. *India in 1923-24* (Calcutta, Government of India, 1924), p. 235.

24. *Young India*, 20 December 1920 (Ahmedabad), Vol. II, p. 402; *Freedom Movement in Bihar* (Patna, Government of Bihar, 1959), Vol. I, p. 314.

25. *Report of the Bihar Vidyapith and its affiliated Institutions, 1921-26* (Patna, Registrar, Bihar Vidyapith, 1926), p. 2.

26. *Progress of Education in India 1917-22* (Calcutta, 1922), pp. 4-5.

in attendance for the entire country was 8.6 (colleges), 5.1 (high schools) and 8.1 (middle schools.)<sup>27</sup> Besides, there occurred a great financial loss too. The Calcutta University alone had to suffer a loss of Rs. 263,000 from mere examination fees.<sup>28</sup>

At this time there also arose a controversy between Tagore and Gandhiji over the boycott movement. The poet was incensed to find that certain students in London would not give a hearing to Mr. Pearson. He believed by adopting boycott of educational institutions Indian students were bringing their offering of sacrifices not to a fuller education but to non-education. It had a hidden motive i.e. a fierce joy of destruction which at its best was asceticism, and at its worst was that element of aggressiveness in which the human nature lost its faith in the basic reality of normal life, found a disinterested happiness in a senseless devastation, as had been displayed in the First World War. In Tagore's view *No* in its passive moral form was asceticism and in its active moral form was violence. He also pointed out, "the desert is as much a form of *himsa* (negligence) as is the raging sea in storm; they both are against life." Expressing his ardent belief in the true assimilation of the East and the West through love Tagore continued, "We should do all we can, not to outrage that truth, to carry its banner against all opposition. The idea of non-co-operation unnecessarily hurts that truth. It is not our hearth fire, but the the fire that burns out hearth and home."<sup>29</sup>

In reply Gandhiji respectfully warned him against mistaking its excrescences for the movement itself. In his view it was as wrong to judge Non-Co-operation by the students'

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27. S. N. Mukerjee, *History of Education in India* (Baroda, 3rd edition, 1957) 224.

28. *Ibid.*

29. R.K. Prabhu and Ravindra Kelkar, ed., *Truth called them differently*, collection of the writings by Gandhiji and Tagore reflecting their controversy over the problem of non-co-operation (Ahmedabad, 1961) pp. 19-21

misconduct in London or Malegaon in India, as it would be to judge Englishmen by the Dyers or the O'Dwyers.<sup>30</sup> Let the poet-philosopher should also remember that Non-Co-operators worshipped Andrews, honoured Stokes, and gave a most respectful hearing to Messrs. Wedgwood, Ben Spoor and Holford Knight at Nagpur, that Maulana Mohamed Ali accepted the invitation to tea of an English official when the latter invited him as a friend. Moreover, Hakim Ajmal Khan, another staunch Non-Co-operator among Muslims, had the portraits of Lord and Lady Hardinge unveiled in his Tibbi College and had invited his many English friends to witness the ceremony. The movement of Non-Co-operation was fundamentally changing the meaning of old terms, nationalism and patriotism, and extending their scope.<sup>31</sup> Indians' participation in the new movement meant that they refused to live in other people's houses as interlopers, beggars or slaves.<sup>32</sup>

#### **Centres of National Education: their ideals and programme**

To arrange the education of those students who had boycotted the government-recognized institutions a number of centres of national education, both in higher and lower level, were set up. In the words of Gandhi, it marked a silent and peaceful revolution.<sup>33</sup> Most prominent among them were Gujarat Vidyapith; Kashi Vidyapith; Bihar Vidyapith in the Sadaquat Ashram; Jamia Millia Islamia (Muslim National University); the Bengal National University; the Tilak Maharashtra Vidyapith and Bombay National Education Society with half a dozen national schools.<sup>34</sup> Even some of the recognized institutions were nationalized by their managing committees like

30. *Young India* (1919-22), n.6, p. 461.

31. *Ibid*, p. 459.

32. *Ibid*, p. 460.

33. *Ibid*, p. 384.

34. For further studies on national education see M.R. Jayakar, n. 15, pp. 427-35, 447, 453.

those of the municipality of Surat, sometimes at the instance of the scholars themselves who set *dharna* and lay prostrate in a sort of hunger strike in front of the private residence of the manager or principal. It was, however, at Calcutta, by the students under the leadership of C.R. Das that the greatest demonstration in favour of nationalization of the existing institutions, was organized. In pursuance of the resolution passed at the Nagpur Students' Conference held in December 1920, an attempt was made by the students early in 1921 to take the initiative into their own hands and nationalize the education. The first sign of the student upheaval was manifested at Bangabasi College. On 12 January, 1921 practically all the 1st and 3rd year students boycotted their classes. They had previously given notice to the College authorities to nationalize the institution. Getting no response from the authorities they walked out of the College, formed a procession and marched through the streets singing national songs and asking the fellow students to come out. Immediately the Ripon College was emptied and nearly half of the City College. About 5,000 students assembled at Mirzapur Square where a great demonstration was held and they were addressed by C.R. Das, B.C. Pal and others. B.C. Pal characterized the movement "a tug of war between the will to freedom and the will to keep in subjection."<sup>35</sup> One by one all the colleges were emptied. On 17 January, 1921, C.R. Das addressed seven large meetings of the students. The example set by Calcutta was followed by other places in Bengal. On 19 January, 1921 Sir Ashutosh Mukherji, Vice Chancellor, addressed the strikers assembled in front of the University and said that he was prepared to cut off all connections with the Government and nationalize the University if the leaders of N.C.O. Movement gave him a crore of rupees for its running.<sup>36</sup> This challenge, it is said, was taken up by C.R. Das who offered to raise the sum if Sir Ashutosh gave a

35. *Indian Annual Register 1921-22 (Calcutta) Vol. 1, p. 137.*

36. *Ibid*, p. 139.

written undertaking that on receipt of the money he would retire from the High Court Bench and lead the National Education movement.<sup>37</sup> Nothing, however, resulted out of it.

On 23 January, 1921 Gandhiji at last came to Calcutta. This helped to fan the agitation still more. A great spirit of national consciousness found a new influx in the youth. After some time Gandhiji again visited Calcutta and inaugurated the National College on 4 February, 1921.

The other educational institutions like the Jadavpur University (founded during the Swadeshi Movement in 1905-06) were reorganized and resuscitated to strengthen the foundation by which the country had been sustained and nurtured since time immemorial. Here too, the pupils were being taught not to look down upon and ridicule everything that was indigenous but to respect the Indian nationality composed of various communities and cultures and to contribute to the joint culture of the entire nation. They appeared to be liberating their minds from the British-imparted illusions that everything Indian was barbaric, imbecile, superstitious and useless, and therefore, deserved contempt. They were also encouraged to think and act independently.

The Jamia Millia Islamia (Muslim National University) was originally started at Aligarh in 1920 by Maulana Mohamed Ali and Dr. Zakir Husain, when a large number of students in the Aligarh Muslim University responded to the Non Co-operation programme<sup>38</sup>. In 1925 it was shifted to Delhi. The University was meant by its founders to be an institution of higher learning. Its main aim was to meet the requirements of the youth who were willing to lead their own way of life and contribute effectively to national development. Education

37. *Ibid.*

38. K. Santhanam, 'Summoning Remembrance of Things Past' 1921 *Movement...* n. 19, pp. 177-78.



in the Jamia Millia was to integrate not only the Indian culture internally but also with the culture of the West externally. Both the Muslim and non-Muslim students were taught to represent the values of their religion and of their moral and cultural traditions. The University was conducted by a band of workers pledged to twenty years' service on a salary not exceeding Rs. 150/ a month and only those individually engaged in services were members of the body. The managing committee and office-bearers were elected from among these members. Thus Jamia Millia functioned as an autonomous community of workers. It used to run a residential college, a residential multi-purpose higher secondary school, a publishing house named the Maktaba Jamia Ltd. and a library, etc.

In the United Provinces (now Uttar Pradesh) the Kashi Vidyapith became the main centre of attraction for national education. It was started with a generous donation from the philanthropist-politician, Shiva Prasad Gupta. It was intended to impart education of university standard. But a condition was attached that the *Pith* would not accept any financial assistance from the Government. Any infringement of this condition would make the *Pith* ineligible to get assistance from the trust established by the founder-donor. Prominent persons like Sri Prakasa, Acharya Narendra Deva, Dr. Sampurnanand joined the teaching staff. Dr. Bhagwan Das himself used to take classes sometimes. It was a galaxy of talent and character of whom any educational institution might well be proud of. Like other institutions of national education, its teachers and students also took a keen interest in national politics. Their bands used to visit villages to take solemn pledges of national service from the people. They propagated Swadeshi and spinning wheel. "Teachers and students of the Vidyapitha were", writes Dr. Sampurnanand in his autobiography, "in the forefront of the fight for freedom and the class-rooms were more than once under police lock and key."<sup>39</sup> During the Salt

39. Sampurnanand, *Memories and Reflections* (Asia Publishing House  
(footnote contd.)

Satyagraha days, a piece of open ground near the Pith, was the main centre of operation. There was a basic difference in the education imparted at the *Pith* and other institutions. "We were told...how our country had been exploited. Books...began to be written from the national point of view", says T.N. Singh.<sup>40</sup>

Influenced by the teachings of Gandhiji Pandit Gopabandhu Das founded a *Vihar* (garden school) near Puri in Orissa. Here great scholars and academicians worked on meagre salaries, foregoing jobs under the British rulers which they could have obtained for mere asking. This school was the cultural centre of Orissa for about two decades. The whole staff was sincerely devoted to reconstructing the nation through national education. All the members were moved by the ideal of transforming each individual's life into a continuous sacrifice in the service of the nation. Thus the education was imparted to further the interest of nationalism.

In 1920 there was also founded the Gujarat Vidyapith, a national institution "to train the students both as nation-builders and soldiers of independence".<sup>41</sup> The Political Conference of Gujarat appointed a committee of twelve to prepare a plan of national education and implement it. "We worked like titans", recalls Kakasaheb Kalelkar, "in those days and within four months of that resolution the Gujarat Vidyapith was founded with an inspiring motto *Sa Vidya ya Vimuktaya* (True learning is what helps secure independence)."<sup>42</sup> Mahatma Gandhi was appointed its life-Chancellor, *Ajanma Kulapati*.

Writing in *Young India* on 17 November 1920 on the National University of Gujarat, Gandhiji gave the following

(previous footnote contd.)

1962), p.38. For further study see T.N. Singh, *My Reminiscences*", n. 19, pp, 185-87 and Sri Prakasa "Eventful Year", n. 19, p. 199.

40 T.N. Singh. "My Reminiscences", n. 19, p. 191.

41. Comment by Kakasaheb Kalelkar, "Those Days of Non-Co-operation", n. 19, p. 118.

42. Ibid.

presentation of the ideals and programme of national education:

The National University stands today as a protest against British injustice and as a vindication of national honour.... It draws its inspiration from the national ideals of a united India. It stands for a religion which is the *Dharma* of the Hindus and Islam of Mohamedans. It wants to rescue the Indian vernaculars from unmerited oblivion and make them the fountains of national regeneration and Indian culture. It holds that systematic study of Asiatic culture is no less essential than the study of Western sciences for a complete education for life. The vast treasures of Sanskrit and Arabic, Persian and Pali, and Megadhi have to be ransacked in order to discover wherein lies the source of strength for the nation....It rather hopes to build a new culture based on the traditions of the past enriched by the experience of later times. It stands for the synthesis of different cultures that have come to stay in India ...that in their turn have themselves been influenced by the spirit of the soil.

Enunciating the ideals further Gandhiji continued:

The spirit of independence will be fostered not only through the religion, politics and history, but through vocational training also, which alone can give the youths of the country economic independence and a backbone that comes out of a sense of self-respect. The University hopes to organise higher schools throughout the mofussil towns, so that education may be spread broadest and filtered down to the masses as early as possible....The suicidal cleavage between the educated and the non-educated will be bridged.<sup>43</sup>

43. *Young India* (1919-22), n. 6, pp 384-86; also see M.K. Gandhi, *The Problem of Education* (Ahmedabad, 1962), pp. 77-79.

Elaborating his views on other occasions Gandhiji emphasized that conditions must be created to enable the poorest Indian to receive the best possible education. Moreover, education  
(footnote contd.)

The Gujarat Vidyapith used to train 250 students in its own campus and contained a number of schools catering for about 37,000 students.<sup>44</sup> Describing the activities of the institution Kakasaheb Kalelkar writes : "...We trained students and sent them to the villages. We prepared the students for the coming fight and also we trained them for reviving village industries and self-reliant village organisations. It was during these days that Gandhiji gave us his complete programme of national regeneration. We had to work for Hindu-Muslim unity.... We worked for the removal of untouchability. We took up the work of the uplift of the aboriginal tribes. Gandhiji gave a new impetus to the women of India to organise themselves for putting new life into Indian homes in the name of *Bharatmata*".<sup>45</sup>

In the State of Karnataka about forty national schools were started<sup>46</sup> Likewise many a school sprang up all over Maharashtra and Tilak Vidyapith was established.<sup>47</sup> Work worthy of being specially mentioned was done in Bombay city in connection with the boycott of Government educational institutions. Sarojini Naidu, Vithalbhai Patel, Gangadharrao Deshpande, Khadilkar, Jamnadas Mehta and other leaders often addressed students and their speeches used to produce a good effect on them.<sup>48</sup>

(previous footnote contd )

must be related to the conditions of life in the country. There must be accord between the education a child received at school and the environments of the home. Besides, it must be so planned as to meet the requirements of the majority of the people. It must be controlled by the people. Above all, it must be free. [M.K. Gandhi, *True Education* (Ahmedabad, 1962 ed ) pp.38-44].

44. K.L. Punjabi, *The Indomitable Sardar* (Bombay, 1962), p. 42.

45. Kakasaheb Kalelkar, n. 38, r p. 118-19.

46. R.R. Diwakar "Seeds were Sown", *1921 Movement : Reminiscences* n. 19, p. 73.

47. Shankar Rao Deo, 'Resolution for Action', *Ibid*, p. 68.

48. Sankar Lal Banker, 'In Retrospect', *ibid.*, p. 41.

According to the Government sources the total number of national schools and colleges in 1921-22 all over the country was 1,342 with nearly one lakh of students.<sup>49</sup> The medium of instruction, of course, in these institutions was the vernacular instead of foreign language that had caused, according to Gandhiji, "brain-fag."<sup>50</sup> Much emphasis was laid on the learning of Hindi. The national universities had their own teaching departments and conducted their own examinations. They used to grant their own degrees and diplomas. They also did not accept Government grants, as they did not want to sacrifice their independence for a meagre sum of money.

The everyday life of the teacher and the taught was also of a different nature from that of the Government-recognized institutions. They lived simple lives with high thinking in an ideal environment of truth and non-violence and were generally maintaining a high character. Instead of chairs and benches they used to sit on gunny carpets and spun for hours together to put the following words of Gandhiji into action :

We are engaged in a spiritual war. We are not living in normal times. I, therefore, venture to suggest to the students.. to suspend their normal studies for one year and devote their time to the manufacture of yarn by hand-spinning. It will be the greatest act of service to the Motherland, and the most natural contribution to the attainment of *Swaraj*. During the late war, our rulers attempted to turn every factory into an arsenal for turning out bullets of lead. During this war of ours, I suggest every national school and college being turned into a factory for preparing cones of yarn for the nation<sup>51</sup>

49 *Progress of Education in India 1917-22. Eighth Quinquennial Review* (Calcutta, Government of India, 1923) n. 5.

50. *Young India* 1919-22, n 6, p. 389.

51. See M.K. Gandhi "The Secret of Swaraj," *Young India* (Ahmedabad) 19 January 1921, p.20, col 2.

Every week-end the students also went to villages and preached non-violence, non-co-operation and social service or performed any kind of remunerative work which did not involve any moral turpitude. They tried to distinguish themselves because of their refinement, modesty and thoughtfulness. They felt inspired by the ideal that no sacrifice was worth the name unless it was a joy. Sacrifice and sadness went ill together. They must be a poor specimen of humanity who needed sympathy for their sacrifice. To have anything for their individual's sake should be a torture to them. Moreover, being students they had less worldly responsibility and liabilities than older persons, and they possessed spirits unsullied by worldly prudence. All this showed that the new cadres in the national institutions were greatly sensitive of national honour and resented and resisted all attempts to humiliate their country. They did not look upon education only as a means of employment under Government, but aspired to develop qualities of good citizenship and be worthy representative of their culture. There could be no room for a 'career' where the ideal was to use one's knowledge for the service of the nation and treat earning of money as secondary. The national institutions thus became good centres for turning out a new race of Indians with a broad national outlook and free from slavish mentality, servants of the nation determined to end the alien rule at the earliest available opportunity, cost what it may. For instance, many of the *Shastris* (degree conferred on graduates) of Kashi Vidyapith gave a very good account of themselves, and occupied position of responsibility in the public life of the nation. The late Prime Minister of India, Lal Bahadur Shastri, was a graduate of the *Pith*. Others like Dr. Keskar, T.N. Singh, Kamalapati Tripathi, late Harihar Nath Shastri (a distinguished labour leader) and Raja Ram Shastri, have by now become well-known figures in India.

All these educational centres were without exception monuments to the patriotism and public spirit of their founders.

The nation as a whole appeared to sympathise with such aspirations. All the Vidyapiths also started meeting annually in the nature of the National Education Conference to discuss their problems. One such conference was held on 1 August, 1924 under the presidentship of Gandhiji. In his speech Gandhiji exhorted the teachers to provide the best education that they could. He also advised them to enhance the reputation of the national universities by conducting them well. He also thanked the teachers for opening 15 schools for untouchables.<sup>51</sup> Referring to the Conference in his *Navajivan* on 10 August, 1924 Gandhiji said :

The teacher should look on education as his duty--*Dharma*—which he must perform. A teacher who ate his bread without performing this *yagna* should be regarded as thief ....The present duty of the teachers is to help in winning the *Swaraj*.<sup>52</sup>

### Limitations of the New System

A basic mistake was made in connection with national education at its inception. Like their predecessors of Bengal Partition days the organizers had imitated in many ways the old colleges and universities established under the supervision of British rule. Their curricula differed very little from those prescribed by the Education Department. But they did not possess the resources either in men or money to be able to compete with those colleges and universities. Complaining about one of them in his letter to Gandhiji on 15 July, 1926, a student nicknamed it a "foreign imitation under national control minus discipline."<sup>53</sup> Many of the teachers did not distinguish between *khadi* and foreign cloth. They dressed like

51. M.K. Gandhi, *The Problem of Education*, pp. 87-102.

52. Ibid, pp. 103-04.

53. Anand T. Hingorani, n. 3, p.86.

*Sahebs* and though themselves dressed in foreign clothes, would lecture the students on *Swadeshi*. They appeared to be reminding one of a drunkard advising others to discard liquor. They delivered long and high-sounding speeches on the spirit of sacrifice and the significance of joining national institutions, when they sent their own sons and daughters to the Government controlled institutions. Above all, most of the teachers were products of the recognized system, and were only qualified to teach what they had learnt. Too often they were not qualified even to do this and the discipline of the new schools was highly lax. Then there were also teachers who had so many family liabilities that the small salary they got was totally inadequate to meet their requirements. So while some of them gave up the jobs and went abroad by raising a loan or securing a gift and increase their earning capacity, others went in search of well paid jobs and yet others tried to secure capital to start business. No longer the ideal of national education satisfied them.

Moreover, the students who were educated in national institutions could not obtain employment either under government or in non-governmental institutions, and they did not possess the other qualifications which their counterparts in government-recognized institutions had. In the absence of a proper opportunity of earning livelihood the strength of the students in national institutions went on dwindling. Only those students remained who had made the service of the nation their life mission. Despite the introduction of certain changes in the curriculum to meet the new contingencies the condition of the institutions went on deteriorating. Many were closed down, and even those that survived just managed to carry on. Suffice it would be to confine the study to one of the provinces, namely, Bihar as a specimen. The Bihar National College inaugurated in 1921 had created so much enthusiasm that some of the best students of Patna University, who were scholarship-holders and prize-winners, boycotted the Government



College and marched in procession to join the new national institute. Gradually the number increased to thousands. But by 1926 there were left only 32 students to study. In June 1922 the Bihar Vidyapith managed 41 high schools, teaching 4,500 students and about 600 primary and middle schools teaching 17,000 students. But by 1926 there were left only 15 middle and 10 primary schools, affiliated to the Vidyapith. The number of students reading in the high, middle and primary schools were respectively only 607, 983 and 483. The number of teachers were 67, 59 and 15 as against 79, 70 and 34 of the last year.<sup>54</sup>

Besides, there were also such planners and organizers of national education, among both Hindus and Muslims, who unsuccessfully tried to establish a synthesis between secular and religious education. Leaders like Maulana Mohamed Ali believed that although all communities in India must try to direct the education of their boys and girls as would entitle it to be named national, each community must arrange separately for the education of its youth. It must be so as each community had its own ideals and traditions. So he considered religious education necessary, but it was controlled by religious teachers most of whom were hypocritical and selfish. In his view the greatest necessity of Muslims was that they should be Muslims in the most realistic sense of the world. The ideal that was primarily kept in view was to produce from these institutions, not only cultured youth according to the contemporary standard, but true Muslims imbued with the spirit of Islam, and possessing enough knowledge of their religion to be in a position "to stand by themselves as sufficiently independent units in the army of Islam's missionaries."<sup>55</sup> He did not at all feel satisfied with the teaching of Theology once a week in the Aligarh University, although it roused communal consciousness among the students.

54. *Report of Bihar Vidyapith and its Affiliated Institutions (1921-1926)* pp. 2 and 9.

55. Afzal Iqbal, ed., *Select Speeches and writings of Moulana Mohamed Ali*. (Lahore; 1944) pp. 413-14.

There was no dearth of such persons in other communities too.

Judged by results, the experience of national education might be pronounced, if not a failure certainly a "very dismal success."<sup>56</sup> The conversion of schools into spinning factories could not indeed be distinguished by any redeeming feature. By the beginning of 1925, out of 30,000 students hardly one thousand were spinning on 100 *charkhas* at the rate of  $\frac{1}{2}$  hour per day.<sup>57</sup> While in principle the institutions were open to *Harijans*, very few in reality had children of that caste in them. Similarly the attendance of the Muslim students was poor.

It appears that there were some liberal-minded people who had already foreseen the defects of national education. They cautioned their youth not to obey Gandhiji in matters of education. Similarly, presiding over the thirty-fifth sitting of the All-India Mahomedan Educational Conference held at Aligarh on 28 December, 1922 Khan Bahadur Mian Fezli Hussain, Minister for Education in the Punjab referred to the disastrous effect of Non-Co-operation on Muslim education. He strongly criticized the destructive programme of educational boycott and cautioned youngmen from being the "dupes of vague and intangible ideas."<sup>58</sup>

### Impact of the Movement

It would, however, be wrong to presume that the boycott of the Government-controlled or recognized educational institutions and establishment of parallel national institutions did not affect the attitude of the Government of India. Though the

56. B. Kumarappa, ed., *Towards New Education*, a collection of writings by Gandhiji (Ahemdabad, 1956) p. 20.

57. *Ibid.*

58. *Summary Report of the Sitting of All-India Muhammadan Educational Conference*, published in the *Indian Review* (Madras, 1923) p. 29.

Provincial Governments were greatly divided, yet the Government of India recognized the compelling necessity for the transfer of primary education to the Indian Ministers to be appointed under iarchy. It believed that such a step would be most responsive to patriotic effort. <sup>59</sup> Gradually the Government also agreed to transfer the whole of the education department with certain reservations related to Europeans, Anglo-Indians and armed forces, to Indian Ministers.

In consequence, both on govenmental and public level, a new political conscioussness grew in the people, particularly in the youth. A strong faith in the significance of education was implanted in their minds. Parents appeared to bear the burden of educating their children. Ambitious plans of development were prepared. Backward communities took keen interest in obliterating the old deficiencies. Advancced women orgainzed social movement to struggle against the centuries-old prejudice against the education of Indian girls. A large proportion of people were stirred to demand education as a right. The old time apathy of the masses was gradually breaking down.

59. *Despatch on the Functions Committee Report*, para 103.

## C—PRESS

*The Government would kill us if they could by a flank attack. To accept defeat in the matter of free speech and free association is to court disaster....We must speak the truth under shower of bullets. We must band together in the face of bayonets. No cost is too great for purchasing these fundamental rights. And on this there can be no compromise, no parleying, no conference.*

*[Mahatma Gandhi, "Immediate Issue" Young India, (Ahmedabad) 5 January 1922, Vol. IV, No. 1, p. 5].*

### Introduction

The political awakening taking place all over the country in the period following the World War I, also manifested in sphere of journalism. The Indian politician who had grown up in an atmosphere of expanding radical democracy all over the world, knew the power of the press. In his times the press had become a powerful social institution. It had come to be glorified as the "Fourth Estate". It moulded as well as brought into limelight all complex problems of modern life. Moreover, it had assisted not only in establishing the modern national state in countries like England, France, Japan, etc., but also a socialist society in Soviet Russia. It also censored the actions of those who controlled the destiny of peoples. It made easy to exchange views on a mass scale in a very

short time. The printed word in the newspaper, the politician knew, could move people to action and decision. He believed that much more could be done to persuade the foreign government through the use of press than with prayer or personal cajolery. Hence a number of fresh papers and journals were started, and most of them were either edited or owned by such persons as made journalism a power and not a mere profession. Such persons were of a unique nature. Others talked of sacrifice. But they had not preached self-sacrifice in mere words; they had shown it by setting example. In a sense, they could be called political *sanyasis*.

Many of the fresh papers, particularly the pro-non-cooperation ones which covered the bulk of the Indian press, were free from the spirit of commercialism. They were conducted by voluntary workers in some cases taking no salary whatsoever and others receiving mere maintenance money. Their national enthusiasm was fully utilized like the volunteers. Profits were returned to the subscribers in some form or other, or were utilized for some constructive public purpose. Due to the display of this self-sacrificing spirit the pro-non-cooperation press became so influential that it affected the circulation of the non-Gandhian papers resulting in financial loss. It shook the hold of the Anglo-Indian press which survived the attack only because it had the support of the foreign regime and the business houses. It swept the field free of most rivals which had no advertising to support themselves. It pleaded for concentrated political journalism and subordinated journalism to politics in the national interest. Moreover, the taste of the public in politics had been developed so much that nothing appeared to sell now except what was against the Government, even though it was sometimes venomous. Public opinion applauded and made a hero of the editor who took courage to defy the alien rule.

**Nationalist Press**

The time when *Young India*<sup>1</sup> came under the control of Mahatma Gandhi, was one of grave trials for the nation. The long accumulated humiliation of the people, reaching its saturation point in the Amritsar tragedy, manifested itself in a civil revolt. *The Young India* became the chief exponent of people's sentiment. The advent of the journal under the editorship of Gandhiji on 8 October 1919 was not a mere event but a phenomenon. Gandhiji had adopted journalism not for its own sake but also as an instrument of fighting against British Imperialism. It enjoyed a wide circulation and its articles were often circulated by the news agencies to daily press. The writings of this weekly displayed not only an unshaken faith in the new techniques of the struggle evolved but also in the impractical possibility of class harmony by making an upliftment of the masses through the so-called conscious effort on the part of the upper classes. Gandhiji believed that an *entente* between the rich and powerful and the poor and lowly at the critical phase of national movement was a primary necessity. This appeared to the organiser of the journal to be the only way to secure national solidarity and to promote national prosperity. And where this logic ended everybody knows it. It is, however, an undeniable fact that for the first time there appeared such writings in the journal which showed the eagerness of the editor to reach the largest number of people, for instance, minute details, and in a better manner than in other journals, of the day-to-day problems of the masses from their living conditions down to the improvement of the cattle owned by them. Most of these articles first appeared in *Navajivan* and afterwards for the benefit of English readers their translation appeared in *Young India*. Gandhiji agreed with the foreign journalists like Lionel Curtis who described the village as a collection of insanitary dwellings constructed on a dunghill. In fact, more pathetic details in his view could be added to those provided by the foreign authors. In

his comments Gandhiji pleaded for some order in the village lanes which required to be macadamised and<sup>1</sup> provided with proper gutters for letting out water. The roads should be, he held, scrupulously clean in this country of millions of bare-footed pedestrians, that nobody should hesitate in walking or even sleeping in the streets. The minimum necessity of a village should be a school, a small dispensary and a *dharmashala* (village rest house for the travellers). An ideal village should also be in a position to defend itself against robbers or wild animals.

Besides, the journal also tried to purge the country of the evils of drink and untouchability that corroded Hindu society. It also emphasized the paramount necessity of removing the differences that existed between various religious communities and sectarian groups. Week after week Gandhiji filled *Young India* with the articles related to the furtherance of the constructive programme.

The journal thus succeeded not only in giving expression to the popular feelings and also in arousing among the people certain desirable sentiments but also fearlessly exposing the undesirable character of the alien rule. Consequently *Young India* was soon read in the farthest corners of India, on many occasions by group. It had numerous readers among farmers and workers. By reading its writings the lower class people felt illusively that they ceased to be "slumbering slaves",<sup>1</sup> their spirit aroused, their liberty was not far off and *swaraj* was approaching quite close. They felt encouraged and elevated.

Despite the use of a moderate though forceful tone the *Young India* exercised a powerful influence on the editors of newspapers and called upon them to put up their views

1. K.P. Kesava Menon, ed., *The Great Trial*; a collection of proceedings of Gandhiji's trial and writings by and on him (Madras, 1922) p 66.

fearlessly without essentially supporting Gandhiji's views or the policies of the Congress. Prior to its own comments the journal published either the text or the summaries as the occasion demanded, of the criticisms of Congress policies. Sometimes Gandhiji also wrote to individual editors acknowledging the weight of their argument and simultaneously expressing his own standpoint in great detail with earnestness. It clearly displayed his anxiety to eradicate misunderstanding rather than silent criticism. By adopting this policy he succeeded on many occasions in putting up an unbiased approach on many a political issue in India.

For the first time even the foreigners began to realize that if they wanted to understand India really they could no longer rely on the information provided by the ruling agencies. Here was the other side of the political situation. Its claims to represent the real India could in no case be ignored but would have to be listened to and studied carefully in order to obtain a balanced account of the whole situation. And on many occasions, if not always, the views expressed in *Young India* counted more than those propagated by the ruling agencies and their allies in India.

After the imprisonment of Gandhiji in 1922 the circulation of *Young India* suffered very badly. Whereas before his imprisonment the strength of the subscribers was 40,000<sup>2</sup>, on his coming out of jail in 1924 it was reduced to 3,000.<sup>3</sup>

With the inauguration of the Non-Co-operation campaign in 1920 the Congress felt the necessity of a daily of its own in the South. By mutual agreement and its own inclinations the *Hindu* was allowed to work as a progressive nationalist

2. *Young India 1919-22* a collection of writings by Gandhiji and others (Madras, 1922) p. 22.

3. D. G. Tendulkar, *Mahatma*, 1920-29 (Bombay, 1951) Vol. II, p. 168.



newspaper.<sup>4</sup> But the real initiative in this direction was taken by Sri T. Prakasam who started the *Swarajya* in 1922 with a group of earnest workers. The paper became very popular within a few weeks. Crowds used to assemble every evening in front of the office blocking the traffic; so eager were they to be the first in the row to obtain the day's number. The paper owed its popularity to the single-handed labours and great personal sacrifices of T. Prakasam. In fact it will not be an exaggeration to say that *Swarajya* and T. Prakasam were inseparable. For the sake of his paper T. Prakasam ruined himself. "Never has a more intrepid spirit", writes an employee in the paper, "burnt itself out in the flames of Fleet Street."<sup>5</sup> But it would not be incorrect to point out that he failed to impress his commanding personality on the paper, for the simple reason that he did not possess the required qualities of a successful editor nor even a proper understanding of the needs of a modern daily. Moreover, the paper was handicapped by the rivalry of already existing daily *Hindu*. All this led to the disappearance of the paper very shortly. Despite financial hardships, it can be said, there was a band of devoted workers who cheerfully shared the strain and distress of the job. Both Krupanidhi and Subba Rao, who were in charge of the office, knew that few would prefer to take the risks of service in an office where a full meal in the

4. In the coverage of the political developments during the national struggle and properly publishing them the *Hindu* also placed in its columns the patriotic writings like the one quoted below:

In misery and want, and oppression and pain one cry has always been able to raise the Indian heart, "It is for India", and the strong man hesitates not; the wife bids her husband go; the mother kisses and blesses her son as he stands upon the threshold and the maiden waves a farewell to her lover as he tops the distant hill. Children in arms throughout the land have learned love of country. Tell me, does not this race deserve to be free?

[Kesava Menon, n. 1, p. 67.]

5. K. Iswara Dutt. *The Street of Ink* (Masulipatam, 1956) p.33.

day was hardly guaranteed and fewer would remain in long enduring perpetual hardship and unavoidable poverty. But their case was different. Knowingly and deliberately they joined T. Prakasam in the venture and refused to think not only of the probabilities of the morrow but of the very requirements of the day. "They were accustomed to find people running away whenever the vessel seemed to be in flames but they stood there on the burning deck, Casablanca like. Staff or no staff, salary or no salary, they strove hard, day in and day out, for years and conducted effective propaganda for the Congress with unfaltering devotion", recalls an employee of the paper.<sup>6</sup>

To propagate their policies and programmes the Congress leaders in U.P. also planned to start some daily newspapers. Among them the most prominent was *The Independent* started by Pandit Motilal Nehru in Allahabad. The paper made a promising start and seriously threatened the *Leader's* monopoly. Its first issue appeared on 5 February 1919. The mission of the newspaper was to expose and attack corruption and ineptitude wherever and whenever they might be found. The paper also propagated Home Rule for India. It was declared to be the "uncompromising foe" of all the forces against the national interest—political or commercial. In his message to the first issue Motilal Nehru said :

Two ideals rule the world. Two realities strive for mastery. The ideal and reality of St. Spartacus, the reality and ideal of Epictetus. The one breaks his chains, the other bares his soul.

*The Independent* has come into existence to lay bare the soul of a nation, of a people ripening into nationhood, of communities merging into a people, of individuals growing

6. *Ibid*, pp. 23-4.

7. *The Independent*, Vol 1, No.1, p.2. (National Archives of India).

into a community. How shall it approach its noble work? Or better still how not? Not along the facile line of opportunism, the fatal line of least resistance, which stifle the soul and pervert the mind. Not by methods of cabal, camera and camarilla which bring no lasting good and help only to distort the outlook. But by bringing the fierce light of day to play on dark spots wherever they exist. By giving expression to the plain impressions of the plain mind in plain language, by striving to press home the eternal truth that while, on the one hand, the natural rights of mankind cannot be withheld to be doled out in little bits with a consciousness of high-minded generosity and a benignly benevolent purpose, those rights cannot, on the other hand, thrive in an atmosphere of religious cleavage and racial antagonism. <sup>8</sup>

Pandit Motilal had gone to the Punjab to enquire into the Amritsar Tragedy. During his long absence the newspaper deteriorated greatly and became involved in financial liabilities. It was stopped finally in 1923. "

The *Pioneer* of Allahabad had declined in circulation as a result of the restrictions imposed on the officials in the matters of their contact with the press, as well as due to the popularity of the *Leader* under C.Y. Chintamani's editorship. Moreover, the paper was censured by the nationalist elements for publishing one Mr. Irwin's letter ridiculing Gandhiji in his national costume.<sup>9</sup> In the later half of the twenties, the newspaper once more took strenuous pains to rehabilitate its popularity with a new editor F.W. Wilson. He introduced a drastic change in the paper's policy, made its appearance more lively and reduced its price from 4 annas to 1 anna per copy. The new editor gave a turn to the policy of the paper progressively to

8. *Ibid.*

9. For further study see *Speeches and Writings of M. K. Gandhi* (Madras, 1918) pp 302-04.

the radical side of Indian politics. The occasion was opportune both for him and the Swarajists who were in those days engaged in wrecking the constitution from within. In his editorials and news columns, Wilson attacked the Government and ridiculed its tactics and manoeuvrings. He eulogized younger Nehru as the "Uncrowned Prince of India". Such lively writings of an Anglo-Indian paper attracted Indian readers in large numbers away from the *Leader*. And the circulation of the paper increased tremendously. Despite the involvement of the editor in costly legal action in connection with the East Indian Railway in 1929, he wrote favourable comments in support of the Indian Communists involved in the Meerut Conspiracy Case.

With the appearance of a cleavage in the Congress ranks after the Gaya Congress the Swarajists also started organising their own press to propagate their policies and programmes. In Calcutta C.R. Das started his daily paper *Forward* on 23 October 1923. Like the *Swarajya* in Madras, the *Forward* appealed very widely to the public imagination in Bengal. Largely due to C.R. Das' own powerful and inspiring writings it exceeded the expectations of its organizer. In its career the paper succeeded in keeping pace with the growing popularity and strength of the Swarajists. Within a short duration it began to hold a leading status in the nationalist press. Its writings were forceful. It adopted special techniques in finding out and exposing official secrets and corruption. The *Forward*, however, declined rapidly after the death of C.R. Das in June 1926 and it maintained an insignificant existence till 1929 when in consequence of an action for damages in which the *Pioneer* of Allahabad was also entangled, it was fined a lakh of rupees and had to stop publication.

The Bengal Swarajists also started publishing another daily paper *Bangalar Katha* under the editorship of Subhas

Chandra Bose, to supplement their propaganda.<sup>10</sup>

In Bengal, besides others, there were two important papers, namely, *Amrita Bazar Patrika* and *Bengalee*. With the commencement of the Non-Co-operation Movement while the former<sup>11</sup> took up every popular issue and pleaded for it in a manner which caught the public imagination, the latter continued to adhere to the rigid policy of constitutionalism as advocated by Surendranath Banerjea who was also its chief editor. Though the commonness of their interests compelled them on several times to express identical views, but their rivalry and competition, both in journalism and politics, which was undoubtedly determined by the clash of personalities, manifested itself powerfully. This approach in two different directions led to the making of the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* the livelier paper of the two. In consequence, while the *Patrika* attained prosperity and fame, the *Bengalee* declined in name and circulation. The anti-Congress policies of Surendranath Banerjea during the tenure of his ministership also affected *Bengalee* and consequently led to its downfall along with its leader and editor. The paper was practically boycotted by the entire educated community in Bengal.

Another leading paper of the Liberals was the *Leader* of Allahabad. Before the departure of the Liberals from the Congress it was considered as the authentic organ of the Right-wing Congress. Adhering to the broad policies of the Liberals the *Leader* supported the constitutional politics. It

10. In Madras, A. Rangaswami Iyengar's *Swadesamitran* (a Tamil daily) became the prominent supporter of the Swarajists. All its resources were placed at the disposal of the local Swarajists.
11. Even before the Non-Co-operation Movement the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* had been advocating the nationalist cause. For instance on 2 June 1919 the paper wrote an editorial on Rabindra Nath Tagore renouncing the knighthood in protest against the "pitiless policy of repression" by the rulers in Punjab. [For further study see *The Evening News* (New Delhi), 18 December, 1972, p. 3].

perpetually and vehemently opposed the policy of Non-Co-operation and Civil Disobedience. When the first Non-Co-operation campaign was in full swing the Congress leaders admitted that no other Indian newspaper had combated their movement so persistently and with so much partisan spirit as this newspaper. To its prejudice against the Congress there appeared to be hardly any limit. Its approach was unpopular particularly when the paper had itself acknowledged with frankness that the radical forces were gaining popularity among the people. Strangely enough, when the nationalist forces led by the Congress were struggling for national independence the editor of the paper was openly pleading for the appointment of a few upper class Indians to certain positions in the administration and judiciary.<sup>12</sup> It does not, however, mean that the paper was friendly to the Government. In fact, some members of the bureaucracy called it a constant, and often a severe, critic of the Government. Like other newspapers it also became the target of bureaucratic suppression but could only be saved by the timely intervention of Liberal leaders. Gradually the paper crossed the stage of being a mere newspaper. It became a national institution.

To undermine the influence of the Anglo-Indian papers like the *Daily Gazzete* of Sind, which adopted the traditional attitude of opposing the national movement, the *New Times* edited by T.L. Vaswani took up the cause of Indian nationalism. Another paper *Hindu* edited by Jairamdas Daulatram, Dr. Choithram P. Gidwani and others, loyally supported the Civil Disobedience and Non-Co-operation Movements and faced persecution in 1930.

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12. For detailed study see *The Report of the Press Commission, Part II* (New Delhi, the Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India, 1955) pp. 142-43.

One of the consequences of the Akali Movement<sup>13</sup> was the starting of the *Hindustan Times* in Delhi in 1923. The funds were arranged by the Akalis. The paper was edited by K.M. Panikkar. But very soon it was sold out to Pandit Madan Mohan Malaviya. Afterwards it was taken over by G.D. Birla who became one of its directors in 1927. The paper was the first of the national dailies to be placed on a stable financial base.

In the vernacular languages there appeared a number of papers and journals which espoused the nationalist cause. Most prominent among them were *Navajivan* (weekly with 12,000 subscribers in 1919) edited by Gandhiji in Gujarati, the Hindi dailies like the *Pratap* of Kanpur edited by Ganesh Shanker Vidyarthi, *Bharat Mitra* and *Viswamitra* from Calcutta and *Venkateswar Samachar* from Bombay, the Urdu dailies like the *Pratap* founded at Lahore by Mahashya Krishen, the *Tej* by Swami Shraddhanand, the *Milap* by Mahashya Khushal Chand at Lahore, a daily Bengalee *Ananda Bazar Patrika* started in 1922 by Mrinal Kanti Ghosh. There also continued to be published old Bengalee papers like *Navasakti*, *Basumati* and Urdu periodicals like the *Hamdard* and *Al-Hilal*. Most of the vernacular papers were directed towards reaching the masses. So the prices were kept low which the poor could also afford.

Like their counterparts in the English language most of the vernacular journals strove for the independence of the country by the popularization of nationalism and the consolidation of the people as a self-respecting, homogenous whole, working for their goal by their own endeavours. There was to

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13. In connection with the Akali Movement it may also be recalled that there were 15 dailies, 8 journals which were printed every fifth day, 67 weeklies, 4 fortnightlies and 25 monthlies in Punjabi, all pleading the cause of Gurudwara reform. [S. Natrajan, *A History of the Press in India* (Asia Publishing House, 1962) pp.206-07.]

be no reliance on the alien rule but full benefit was to be derived from the world forces and friendly relations with other countries.

**Communist Press**

But the attempt to achieve homogeneity against a common adversary cracked and met its doom with the debacle at Bardoli on 12 February 1922 after Chauri Chaura, when the Working Committee of the Indian National Congress withdrew the whole movement of national liberation. For more than four years since 1919 Gandhiji had kept the people in a forlorn situation of expectancy by his so-called magic slogan of "Swaraj within one year." Gandhiji had already failed to achieve it. But what dismayed and astonished many a nationalist, was the Bardoli decision. It witnessed the disintegration of the social and political forces that constituted the movement of national liberation. Among those who were angered by the Congress leadership was also M.N. Roy, one of the pioneers of the Communist Movement in India. In a manifesto issued on 15 July 1922 he denounced the suspension of the movement as a "veritable betrayal of the revolutionary rank and file by the non-revolutionary and reactionary leadership."<sup>14</sup>

In a letter to the Indian National Congress towards the close of December 1922 the ECCI wrote that "British rule can and will be overthrown only by a violent revolution", and argued that peaceful means advocated by Gandhiji could not be successful.<sup>15</sup>

14. M. N. Roy & Evelyn Roy, *One Year of Non-Co-operation* (Calcutta, 1923) p 60.

15. Jane Degras, selected and edited, *Documents of the Communist International: 1919-1943*, (London, Royal Institute of International Affairs, 1960) Vol. I, pp. 11-12.



It does not, however, mean that the Communist International gave a call to the radical wing within the Congress to break away from the parent body. Farsighted and pragmatic as the leaders of the Communist International were, they were fully aware of the dangerous and the suicidal situation that could emerge out of the anti-imperialist movement being fought independently by the Congress *bourgeoisie* and the leftist forces. They knew that in such a situation the British imperialists would completely annihilate both the wings of the national liberation struggle. The leaders of the Communist International, therefore, argued that the liberation of India must be proceeded by stages—first, the overthrow of the existing imperialist Government and its replacement by a Government of the Indian *bourgeoisie*; and next, the overthrow of the latter and its replacement by a Government of the Indian proletariat. They also advocated an agrarian programme which implied an unconditional abolition of landlordism, the national ownership of land and its distribution among the poor peasantry. Their slogan was “confiscation without compensation.”<sup>16</sup>

But M.N. Roy, as a result of his terrorist background, behaved like an adventurer. He advocated complete social revolution. In his booklet *What Do We Want ?* he said:

We are against private ownership of public utilities. We Demand Their Nationalisation Under Swaraj. Our object is a complete social revolution, which means the abolition of private ownership in the means of production, distribution and exchange. We must learn to direct the organized energy of the rural masses towards the redress of those innumerable immediate grievances which make their lives a burden. Mass action thus begun, will develop into organized

16. This programme was summarized by M. N. Roy in his booklet *What Do We Want? For further study see Conviction ... in Bolshevik Conspiracy Case; Home (Pol.) Dept., Govt. of India, File No. 261/1924, p. 110.*

agrarian strikes, into food riots, the plunder of cornstocks and assaults upon large estates with the idea of confiscation. Reactionary pacifism must be liquidated. What burst out spontaneously at Gorakhpur, Rai-Bareilly, Chauri Chaura, Malabar, Central India and what is going on in the Punjab, must be developed by every possible means. Peasant revolts should spread like wild-fire from one end of the country to the other.<sup>17</sup>

Continuing his plea he further stated:

The exploited masses can be educated and organised effectively only in the school of Revolutionary Mass Action....It is our task to infuse consciousness in these toiling masses, to develop the spontaneous awakening and to intensify their rebellious spirit by leading their struggle for the redress of their immediate grievances. Our object should be to create discontent everywhere against the present system of exploitation and to intensify it wherever it exists. Thus will the idea of Swaraj be brought within the understanding of the workers and peasants of India. Let us lead them forward under the slogans "Down with Foreign Rule", "Down with all exploitation", "Land to the peasant and Bread to the worker."<sup>18</sup>

In *Inprekorr* of January 1923 Roy also wrote that Gandhiji and his Congress Party represented the *petty-bourgeoisie*, but the movement would eventually be captured by its radical minority which wanted political action, not passive resistance. Gandhiji's Non-Co-operation campaign was designed to get concessions for the *petty-bourgeoisie* from the British Government.<sup>19</sup>

At the fifth Congress in 1924 itself Manuilsky, reporting for the Colonial Commission, attacked Roy for his emphasis on the social as distinct from the nationalist movement. This,

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17. Ibid, p.110.

18. Ibid, p 111.

19 Jane Degras, n.15, p.12.

he said, was a reflection of Rosa Luxemburg's nihilist attitude on the national question.<sup>20</sup>

Both these standpoints begun to be propagated by 15 May 1922 when M.N. Roy's fortnightly journal the *Vanguard of Indian Independence* made its appearance. It may be mentioned that the names of the publishers, of the presses at which printed, and the places of issue, were all fictitious—the persons imaginary and the presses non-existent. It was, however, believed that the journal had been printed at Hamburg. Thousands of its copies had regularly and clandestinely been sent to India to recruit new cadres to the Marxist movement. It was described as a "journal of revolutionary politics". At the top of the paper appeared the motto "Not the Masses for Revolution—But Revolution for the Masses!"<sup>21</sup> It claimed to be the central organ of the Communist Party of India and to have received recognition as such from the Communist International. On 15 May 1922 the *Vanguard* wrote:

Foreign rule has to be overthrown because it has been obstructing our national growth, and is detrimental to our economic and social evolution.<sup>22</sup>

*The Vanguard* had a considerable circulation in various parts of the country. Its packets were received secretly at different addresses supplied by local Communists. Writing to Muzaffar Ahmad from Berlin on 25 July 1922, Roy said: "All your letters and telegrams have been duly received. We are very glad to know that the papers (copies of *Vanguard*) arrived and were favourably received." In his letter Roy goes on to discuss arrangements for safe despatch

20. Ibid.

21. Cited in the *Judgement in Bolshevik Conspiracy Case: Home (Pol.) Dept., Govt. of India, File No.261/1924, p.42*. For further study see Muzaffar Ahmad, *Myself and the Communist Party of India*, (Allied Publishers, 1970), pp.61-3.

22. Ibid, p.44.

and distribution of Communist literature sent to Muzaffar Ahmad and asked him to select youngmen to be sent to Berlin for training.<sup>23</sup>

Shortly afterwards Muzaffar Ahmad sent his reply in which he detailed the difficulties in enrolling new members to the movement. Particularly he expressed his indignation against the deeply-rooted religious feelings even among those matured people who could by all standards be safely categorized as true nationalists. Nevertheless, Muzaffar Ahmad was not dismayed. In his letter he stated in an optimistic tone:

But our hope is that we shall be able to win over the new generation easily. Even now there are echoes of our principles from many places. Do not be *hopeless* on any account. Victorious we must be... Many will be able to create obstacles to our work but none will be able to wreck it.

In the same letter Muzaffar Ahmad pointed out that he and his colleagues were not being able to consolidate their influence for want of vernacular papers. He felt that there was much need of papers in vernacular languages.<sup>24</sup>

Shaukat Usmani also contributed articles to the *Vanguard*. They were in due course of time published. One such article was "Thoughts on the Gaya Congress" which appeared on 1 March 1923. On this very date there was published another article "An Appeal to Labour."<sup>25</sup> The appeal was headed with the motto "United Anti-Imperialist Front". Another leading article in the same journal was called "Definition of Swaraj" which was to be "complete separation from all Im-

23. Cited in the *Judgement in Bolshevik Conspiracy Case*, Home (Pol.) Dept. Govt. of India, File No 278/1922, pp. 27-8

24. *Ibid.*, p 11.

25. *Ibid.*, pp.13-4.

perial connection and the establishment of a Republican State". An "inset" headed "Landlordism, Capitalism and the Congress" jeered at remarks by Shrinivasa Sastri that "to pull things up by their very roots is a policy on which all patriots can dwell with the most profound grief and anxiety." Then followed "Notes and Comments" on "Degeneration or Revolution", "Sacrosanct Landlordism", "Asiatic Federation" (a Union of all Eastern peoples enslaved by Imperialism), "The United Anti-Imperialist Front of the Revolutionary Parties."<sup>26</sup>

The *Advance Guard* was the changed name of the *Vanguard of Indian Independence*. The *International Press Correspondence* was the name of the English edition of a publicity pamphlet printed at Berlin and issued weekly in various languages. It gave the name of M.N. Roy as the Communist International Representative for India and designated him as "Reporter" for the Far Eastern Section of the Communist International at the Fourth Congress of the Communist International held at Moscow in November 1922. It also printed, in *extenso* his "report" of that Congress. A letter signed by M.N. Roy to one of his Indian adherents, dated Moscow, 2 November 1922, contained the following: "Being here for taking part in the preliminary works of the Fourth Congress, I could not write to you any earlier....I am in charge of the Eastern Section of the Congress, but here is no Indian delegation....It is only here, that one can get a true perspective... on the revolutionary movement in the Eastern subject countries. It is too bad that our movement, which is the most powerful of the Colonial National Movements, should remain so isolated..."<sup>27</sup>

26, *Conviction...in Bolshevik Conspiracy Case*, n 16, p.107. For further study see also Muzaffar Ahmad, *Myself and the Communist Party of India* (Calcutta, 1970), pp.64-5.

27. *Ibid*, p.108.

Some of Roy's letters were written in English and some in Bengali, in both cases they bear various signatures; but they were separately written by the same person.

The letters were all intercepted by the Central Intelligence Bureau of the Government of India in censorship; some were retained in original and others were allowed to go on after being photographed.

As regards Roy's control of the *Vanguard* and *Advance Guard* the following evidence is available from letters written by him to correspondents in India :

Berlin, 10th September 1922---We apprehended from the very beginning that Government would issue orders to confiscate the paper....There were, however, reasons for not yet changing the title of the paper as you had advised.... Arrangements could possibly be made for smuggling the paper into India, and much has already been done on this score, but unless arrangements are simultaneously made at the other end, our endeavours would be of no avail....The 9th issue has been out and has been despatched by this mail. For the next issue, a different name would be adopted.<sup>28</sup>

The ninth and last issue of *The Vanguard of Indian Independence* was dated 15 September 1922: the next issue of the paper which was a fortnightly dated 1 October 1922, appeared under the title *The Advance Guard*. In a letter written from Berlin on 26 September 1922 Roy stated:

The circulation of the paper has become a difficult task.....At least a thousand copies are sent out in all....The title of the paper has been changed in this issue but I do not think it will have any effect. They will again issue

28. Ibid, p.109.

orders of prohibition and confiscation. It is necessary that secret circulation of the paper should be arranged.<sup>29</sup>

From Berlin on 31 January 1923 he wrote:

It is a matter of regret that our paper is not sufficiently reaching the country. They are being sent for a long time according to your direction....They are being sent inside envelopes in the form of letters, one copy inside newspapers—2-4 copies inside newspapers and in big packets too. Please enquire which of these are reaching.<sup>30</sup>

The *Advance Guard* resumed its original title of *Vanguard* since 15 February 1923. Subsequent issues had also reached India. In January it was publishing "Letters from India"—the result of the connections established in India by Roy. About 500 copies were being intercepted regularly in India and large quantities of Communist literature from Communist bodies in Europe, much of it addressed to Labour Unions.<sup>31</sup>

In October 1922 three packets of Bolshevik literature including 16 copies of Roy's *India in Transition* were found on a German ship in Leith. In December 1922, 540 copies of Roy's "Program" were intercepted at Gaya Post Office.<sup>32</sup> As a result of the measures taken to hamper his communications with India, Roy was now turning his attention to developing a courier system amongst Indian *lascars* on vessels sailing to India. It is probable that in this purpose he got assistance from the efforts made by the *Lascars' Welfare League* to organize Indian Seamen in England. Roy had further opened up communication with a well-known revolutionary Ram Charan Lal Sharma, living as an exile, in Pondicherry and with the latter's assistance hoped to arrange for the despatch of literature and trained

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29. *Ibid.*

30. *Ibid.*, pp. 53-4.

31. *Ibid.*, p. 54.

32. *Ibid.*

Communists to British India through Pondicherry. As regards literature, it seemed that these arrangements were well in working order, for copies of the *Vanguard* were being posted from Pondicherry into British India.

The *Vanguard* had drawn sympathetic letters and subscriptions from India, Java, Sierra Leone and the United States of America and according to Central Intelligence Bureau it appeared to have been the means by which Roy obtained two very valuable supporters, Dange in Bombay and Singaravelu Chettiar in Madras.<sup>33</sup>

A close scrutiny of the documents related to the subject sometimes clearly indicate that M.N. Roy was a little bit too egotistic. It is also the impression of some of the early pioneers of Marxism in India that he despatched to them his own writings and pamphlets in larger quantity than those documents which were issued by the Communist International. This charge is substantiated to a considerable extent from one of his letters written to Muzaffar Ahmad in those days. It was intercepted by the Central Intelligence Bureau of the Government of India and was kept on record to be produced as prosecution witness in Kanpur Communist trial. In this letter Roy wrote:

We can supply money for publishing my pamphlets in the Bengalee language.... All my pamphlets have been published in Urdu language .... Make efforts to publish some in Bengalee too.... Try to publish our programme in the Bengalee, Urdu and Hindi languages. It is necessary to publish the third pamphlet in the country also; it may be published with a new name and without the name of the author. This has been done in Lahore. It is necessary also to publish the gist of our paper in the Bengalee language. For all this work, some monetary help may be given. <sup>34</sup>

33. Ibid.

34. Ibid. p.111.



The press activities were also organized by the Indians in Tashkent Military School in 1920. They had started a bilingual paper in Urdu and Persian called *Zamindar*. It was edited by Mohammed Shafiq. The objectives of the paper were:

- to unite all revolutionary groups in the East;
- to expose the cruelties practised by the British in India;
- to prepare the Indian working class for revolutionary action;
- to expose the slanderous campaign of the British press against Communism and Soviet Russia.<sup>35</sup>

Very soon the Indians in Tashkent realized that they could not mobilize the Indian masses unless they sent their literature from Tashkent to India. But it was very difficult to do so. Akbar Khan, therefore, left for India to establish a printing press which could publish literature to be distributed among the Indian people. He managed to send the printing machine to the tribal areas of North-Western Frontier Province, but when he was finalizing his plan, he was arrested.

In Bombay, S.A. Dange undertook the formation of a Communist group and established a monthly journal entitled *The Socialist* with the help of Lotwala. It had regularly published and propagated Communist ideas. In this work he was being greatly assisted by T.A. Parvate and also by certain other individuals, some of whom had allowed themselves to be used as accommodation addresses for communications, letters and literature, sent from Europe by M.N. Roy, and was, according to a confidential report of P.C. Bamford, Deputy-Director

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35. Cited by S.M. Mehdi, *The Story Behind "Moscow, Tashkent Conspiracy Case"* (Delhi, 1967), p.23.

of Central Intelligence Bureau, formally appointed as Roy's chief representative in India by the prominent Communist, Charles Ashleigh, who handed over to him certain instructions from Roy before being himself deported from Bombay.<sup>36</sup> Dange's paper jealously fought for the rights of labour. It may be recalled that the Government of India had issued a draft notification in January 1923 in connection with the emigration of Indian labour to the Malay States. The new order had imposed certain hardships on Indians there. Deploing the attitude of the Government and sympathizing with the cause of emigrants on 20 January 1923 the *Socialist* wrote :

The heart-rending appeal of the Indian emigrant... calls for an earnest endeavour on our part to put a check on the prosecution of our countrymen there.... The Federated Malay States put on the Western market the greatest supply of rubber. White capital sends the manufactures of this very rubber, raised from the blood of our workers, to the Indian markets. The Congress means to effect boycott of foreign goods but does not see the right way of smashing White Capital in these islands.... Today, with greater consciousness of the people and the improved organizational apparatus of the Congress on our side, we can execute the plan, jointly chalked out by M. Gandhi and Lokamanya Tilak, with greater and surer success. Will the Executive of the Congress move in this affair?<sup>37</sup>

In Madras, Communist press activity had taken a slightly different form. There, Singaravelu Chettiar, with M.P.S. Velayuddham as chief assistant, and Dr. Mani Lal and Ganga Prasad<sup>38</sup>, both of Gaya, and others, had been working in drawing up a

36. Cited in *Conviction ... Bolshhevik Conspiracy Case*, n. 16, p.99.

37. *Selections from the Native Newspapers, Bombay, January-June 1923*, p. 96.

38. Ganga Prasad who was working under the alias of "R. Charlu", had been identified by the Intelligence Department as Abani Mukharji.

constitution for a "legal" Communist party which he had called *The Labour and Kishan Party of Hindustan*. This move had been taken in direct communication with Roy and according to his advice, the aim being to form an ostensibly harmless "legal" organisation under the shelter of which an inner circle of revolutionary Communists might be recruited.

This point had been very clearly developed in intercepted correspondence which had passed between Roy and his colleagues in India. Roy had laid great stress on the formation of a "legal" party and it is interesting to note that same procedure had been followed by the Communist party in America, where a Workers' party had been formed for identically the same reasons.

By making a wide circulation of a manifesto the recruitment for the *Labour and Kishan Party of Hindustan* was now being actively pushed both in Madras and the centres where Communist groups existed. The editors of two other newspapers in the Madras Presidency, Krishna Rao, of *Navayuga* and E.L. Ayer, of *Swadharma* had also taken an active part in assisting Dange and Singaravelu in their work, and in the preparation of the latter's Manifesto.

In the autumn of 1922 the Bengali Communist publications like *Atma Sakti*, *Dhumketu*, *Deshar Bani*, *Navyug*, *GanVani* were actively engaged in the anti-imperialist movement in Bengal. They were simultaneously waging an incessant struggle against landlordism, money-lending classes and exorbitant rates of rent and tax collected from the peasants. In addition, for some time, a Bengali weekly *Jagaran* (Awakening) was published from Kushi in Nadia district. This journal supported the party but was not a party organ.

A number of prominent newspapers including the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* (Calcutta), the *Servant* (Bombay), and the *Bande Matram* (Lahore) had also been publishing pro-Bolshevik articles.

The last mentioned published the famous Manifesto issued by the *Third International* to the Indian National Congress. Full text of this Manifesto had<sup>39</sup> appeared in the *Vanguard*. The *Nation* which was started by Diwan Chaman Lal as an English daily at Lahore on 1 January 1922, declared itself "opposed to imperialism and capitalism."<sup>39</sup> In March it was publishing Communist literature.

At about this time the Central Intelligence Bureau reported that generally there had been a marked increase in the publicity activities of Communists. Much of it was considered of "insidious kind"<sup>40</sup> dealing with workers. This was encouraged by the Congress Resolution, passed at the Gaya Congress, for the organization of labour.

The effect of Communist publicity on leading politicians can be illustrated from the performances of C.R. Das. At Lahore about the beginning of November 1922 he suggested that the changed programme of the Congress should include the organization of Labour.<sup>41</sup> A few days later at Dehra Dun he and V.J. Patel spoke of the interests of the masses as opposed to those of the capitalists. These utterances were applauded by the *Amrita Bazar Patrika* and the *Socialist*.<sup>42</sup> About the same time C.R. Das explained to some friends that he had been converted to the theory that without the support of the masses no advance was possible.<sup>43</sup>

After the Gaya Congress there came a period of self-explanation. The *Amrita Bazar Patrika* tried to explain on 2 January 1923 that there was no connection between Roy's theories and those of C.R. Das and a few weeks later C. R. Das himself announced in a speech at Bombay that his scheme

39. *Conviction...in Bolshevik Conspiracy Case*, n. 16, p.54.

40. *Ibid.*

41. *Ibid.*

42. *Ibid.*

43. *Ibid.*

of *Swaraj* would recognize private property and encourage the growth of individual wealth. <sup>44</sup>

In the autumn of 1922 the Lahore Communists also started publishing *Inquilab* in Urdu. First it appeared as a fortnightly and then a monthly. The periodical ceased to appear in February 1923. The office of the *Inquilab* had a large number of newspapers on their exchange list. viz. *Vanguard* (Germany), the *Communist* (London), the *Aman* (Afghan) and the *Daily Herald* (London) and *Socialist* (Bombay).

Attached to the *Inquilab* office there were two book depots at which labour literature was sold. They were the property of Ghulam Nabi. Four pamphlets were published during this time by the Lahore group; the first was the *Swaraj-i-Jamhoor* (Swaraj of the Masses). It was curled from the *Inquilab* newspaper and published in 1922. The second pamphlet was *Hindustan Ki Tahrik -i- Trade Union*. This was also taken from the *Inquilab*. The third *Zapata* was a translation of an article which appeared in the *Socialist* newspaper of Bombay edited by S.A. Dange. The pamphlet was translated into Urdu by Ghulam Hussain. The last was *Hindustan Ki Siasi Jadd-o-Jehad*. This was an adaption of M.N. Roy's book called *India's Problem and its Solution*. A preface written to the fourth pamphlet was eventually proscribed by Government.

From Lucknow were published in 1923 two journals *Hamdard* and *Mazdur*, which derided British capitalism for exploiting Indian labour. Still another humorous paper, *Oudh Punch* twitted the British for seeing Bolsheviks everywhere.

But the colonial authorities striked against the movement in 1924 by arresting all the prominent Communists and by holding their trial at Kanpur. These repressive measures

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44. Ibid.

greatly upset the Communist organization in the United Provinces, Punjab, Bengal, Bombay and Madras.

Within a short span of time the Communists again became active in the anti-imperialist movement. As already pointed out in an earlier chapter, the Central Committee of the Communist Party was established in 1925. Shortly afterwards it resumed its publicity and propagation activities. The following correspondence exchanged between the Party and the Home Department of the Government of India is quite interesting as well as revealing:

From    The General Secretary,  
          The Communist Party of India,  
          Delhi.

To       The Honourable The Home Member,  
          The Government of India,  
          Simla.

Sir,

Whereas the Communist Parties are the International Organizations of the Working Class, THE COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA desires to seek a close co-operation of the parties in the foreign lands and particularly in England and other British Colonies, for the promotion of their common cause. I would be obliged to know from you if the Government of India will have any objection and whether our correspondence with these parties or persons like Messrs M.N. Roy, S. Saklatwala, M.P., George Lansbury, M.P. and others interested in Indian affairs, will be intercepted and stopped.

I shall further be thankful to know if the Government of India can have any objection if we import literature for distribution from outside so long as the arrangements to publish it in this country are not made.

Can you supply me with the list of the proscribed literature to enable me to know the names of the publishers and their books prohibited from entering into India?

What publications of the Communist, Socialist and other labour parties are not allowed to be imported here?

In the end I hope, you will be good enough as to favour me with an early reply to enable me to begin my work promptly. Since the matter is purely of public interest I take the liberty of sending a copy of this letter to the press for publication <sup>45</sup>

Sincerely yours,  
J. P. Bagarhatta

From Political Branch,  
Home Department.

To The General Secretary,  
The Communist Party of India,  
Delhi.

Sir,

With reference to your letter dated the 2nd July 1926 addressed to the Hon. The Home Member, I am directed to say that the answers to your questions about correspondence and the import of literature are to be found in the provisions of the law. The import and distribution of literature is not an offence unless such literature contains seditious matter or matter which offends in any other way against the Law or unless its entry has been prohibited under the Sea Customs Act. Full publicity is given to prohibitions of import and it is not anticipated that you will be in any

45. *Enquiry by the General Secretary of the Communist Party of India as the Law about correspondence and import of literature*, Home (Pol) Dept, Govt. of India, File No 181/1926, p.3.

difficulty in coming to conclusions as to the publications, the import of which would contravene the law.

I have, etc.  
Sd- H.G. Haig,  
Secretary,  
(Home Department).<sup>46</sup>

In his confidential note the Director of Intelligence Bureau, D. Petrie, concurred with the above reply. He was against the supply of a list of proscribed literature. First, he thought that there was no obligation. Secondly, the list was confidential. Further, the list was a complete bibliography of objectionable literature, and the possibilities, he thought, of its "misuse" by persons such as the applicant, were obvious.<sup>47</sup>

Not bothering at all about the Government restrictions the Communist Party started its publication work. In July 1925 an appeal to the workers of Great Britain was issued by the Bombay group of the Party. Entitled "Imperialism and Labour" it exposed British policy in India and maintained that the real interests of the proletariat of the two countries being the same, imperialism was harmful to both. Imperialist policy could not benefit British labour. It denounced the British Labour Party and urged that struggle against Imperialism and its friends inside the Labour Movement should be inspired not by liberal sentiments but by the consciousness of class interests. The disintegration of the Empire was the *sine qua non* for the introduction of a new social system in England. It appealed to the British proletariat to dissociate itself from the imperialist politics of the *bourgeoisie* and support India's struggle for independence. The Appeal added that the imperia-

46 Ibid, p. 4.

47. Ibid.



list reconciliation with the Indian *bourgeoisie* would open up a new era of imperialist exploitation and, therefore, it was essential to organize a united front against Imperialism. The Commonwealth of Nations was a hoax.<sup>48</sup>

On 5 and 7 May 1926 the *Muslim Outlook* of Lahore published two leading articles headed: "Anything May Happen" and "Possibilities". The purport of these articles was that in consequence of the labour strike then going on in England, the Government of the Empire was "tottering to its fall" and might be in the near future replaced by a government on the model of Soviet Russia: with the sequel that there might be established in India a number of Soviet republics subordinate to a Central Soviet in London.<sup>49</sup>

The Government was seriously considering to take action against the paper.

In December 1926 a Manifesto was addressed by the C.P.I to the Indian National Congress at the time of its annual session at Gauhati. It was published from London. The Manifesto took a disconcerting note of the nationalist *bourgeois* parties which were isolated from the masses. Both the Congress and the Swaraj Party were considered deficient in this matter. The Manifesto found the national movement in a state of decomposition. It charged that the leadership of the Swaraj Party was predominantly *bourgeois* and there was prevailing a sharp contradiction between the leadership and its rank and file. Its programme and policy were always formulated by the *bourgeois* and feudal classes. It stipulated: "The Swaraj Party will not be able to become a party of the people unless it breaks away completely from the *bourgeoisie* seeking compro-

48. M.N Roy, *National Communism (Beware of false friends)*, in September 1926 in the *Masses of India*.

49. Home (Political) Dept., Govt. of India, File No. 154/1926, p.1.

mise with imperialism".<sup>50</sup> Rightly, still thinking in terms of building up a party on the programme of revolutionary nationalism, it urged the Swaraj Party to adopt a fresh programme reflecting the interests of the masses.

According to the same Manifesto the Congress also fared no better. Though no basic differences divided them, yet it was split up in warring factions. Like the Swaraj Party it was also under the control of *bourgeoisie*. It thus spoke to the Congress:

The National Congress at Gauhati must adopt a programme of democratic national freedom. Pseudo-Parliamentarism should be replaced by militant mass action. The policy of surrender and compromise should be discarded. The National Congress should be liberated from the treacherous bourgeois leadership and brought under the influence of Republican Peoples' Party.<sup>51</sup>

C. G. Shah who developed contacts with S. A. Dange and Ghate roundabout the year 1922, subsequently became one of the leading Indian theoreticians of Marxism. When Communism was still a marginal phenomenon in Indian politics, particularly before the Kanpur Communist trial of 1924, the small Bombay group of Dange, Shah, etc. tried to spread ideas of Marxism and strived to build politically and ideologically trained cadres. Those were the times of the undisputed sway of Gandhism when even the Indian intellectuals were hypnotically spellbound by the Gandhian experiment in Indian politics. At this critical juncture C. G. Shah took cudgels with Gandhism. He published his famous article "The Hundred Per Cent Indian" in the form of a brochure in 1926. It embodied a Marxist critique of the *Hind Swaraj*

50. *A Manifesto to the All-India National Congress, Gauhati, December 1926 by the C.P.I.*

51. *Ibid.*

published by Gandhiji in the first decade of the twentieth century wherein the Mahatma led a crusade against the modern civilization and its advanced techniques. He idealized the pre-modern Indian society and exhorted Indians to resuscitate the old society. It is not incidental to point out that Shah's article represented an effort of the author to reinterpret Indian history from the Marxist sociological standpoint, from the basis of Historical Materialism. The author attempted to analyse and elaborate the basic reason of the traditional *status quo* of the indigenous society. This remarkable brochure was described by M. N. Roy, in his review of the book "as the first Marxist work published by an Indian Marxist in India." Other eminent Indians like Rabindranath Tagore and Jadunath Sarkar also admired the article. C. G. Shah had opened the article with the following lines:

The "philosophy" of Gandhism based on religious and metaphysical prejudices, subjective illusions and unhistorical social and economic ideas, work as a brake on the further material and intellectual development of modern India. From the standpoint both of the emancipatory struggle of the Indian people and the higher Government of the human society and civilization, Gandhism represents a classic obstacle. <sup>52</sup>

Besides, the newspapers and publications issued by the Communist International like the *Sunday-Worker*, *The Communist*, *The Farmers' and Peasants' International Correspondent*, *The Workers' Life*, *The Working Woman*, *The Labour Monthly*, *The Pan-Pacific Worker*, *The Pan-Pacific Monthly*, *The Far Eastern Bulletin* were secretly sent to India. <sup>53</sup> Their importa-

52. C. G. Shah, *Marxism-Gandhism-Stalinism* (Bombay, Popular Prakashan, 1963) p. 244

53. For further study see *Additions to the List of Newspapers and publications issued by the Communist International or associations affiliated to or controlled by them*; Home (Pol.) Dept., Government of India, File No.84/1927.

tion was prohibited by the orders of the colonial authorities.

Though Roy's influence in the Communist International Movement was declining by 1925, yet he made intermittent endeavours to assert his authority. The publication of his booklet *Future of Indian Politics* was an attempt in this direction. But in the meanwhile he was sent to China early in 1927. Yet, there also he did not remain a mere onlooker on Indian affairs. He attempted to spread discontent among the Indian troops and despatched messages through the North-East. But Roy's stars were on descent, and he rapidly lost his influential position. The Indian Communists had also become critical of Roy's policies and views.

In the later phase of twenties a number of workers' and peasants' parties were, as already pointed out, being founded in various parts of the country. These parties started their own vernacular journals. While the Bombay group was publishing *Kranti* (Revolution),<sup>54</sup> a Marathi weekly in April 1927, the Punjab group also started some periodicals. One of these, *Kirti* with emblem of sickle and hammer was edited in Punjabi by Sohan Singh Josh. Firoz Mansoor was in-charge of its Urdu edition. The paper received considerable contribution from abroad, particularly from the Ghadarite Sikhs in America, whose help was more due to its revolutionary nature rather than Communism. The United Provinces group's organ *Krantikari* made its first appearance on 17 November 1928 with the motto: "We are revolutionaries. The banner of revolt is in our hands."<sup>55</sup>

In January 1929 M. G. Desai, a journalist influenced by Marxism, who had returned from England in November 1928,

54. For further study see Home (Pol.) Department, Govt. of India, File No. 10/14/1929.

55. *Krantikari*, No. 1, 17 November 1928.

published a paper called *Spark*. Its first issue appeared on 27 January 1929 and the last on 10 March 1929. The paper ridiculed conservatism in Indian politics and propagated views of militant and radical nature. The editor possessed a remarkable journalistic capacity for qualifying facts with his socialist approach. He had modestly described his paper as "A Socialist Weekly"; but when an influential Anglo-Indian daily described the Socialist Weekly as a rag, he was quick to retort that it was a rag "soaked in Marxian Oil".<sup>56</sup> This and similar witty remarks culminated in Desai's placation in the so-called Meerut Conspiracy case. With his arrest the publication of *Spark* ceased. Soon after it was, however, suggested to Lester Hutchinson, an English journalist, to revive the publication of the paper. He agreed to bring out a weekly paper, rather different from Desai's production, but maintaining the name *Spark* as a tribute to Desai and in order to draw full benefit out of the publicity which had attended the demise of the *Spark*. To distinguish the new paper from the old one, the word *New* was added.

The first number of the *New Spark* appeared in the beginning of May 1929. It was very favourably received by the progressive-minded people. Reviewing the contribution of the weekly the editor himself wrote after some years:

Everything considered, *The New Spark* represented a brief struggle against the overwhelming forces of orthodoxy. Its opponent was Goliath, but it was by no means a David; its pebbles would have been better fired if its sling had been kept in better repair.<sup>57</sup>

Towards the latter half of 1929 Lester Hutchinson was also placated in "the Meerut conspiracy" to deprive the king of his sovereignty over British India. He was arrested while

56. Remarks quoted by Lester Hutchinson, *Conspiracy at Meerut* (London, George Allen & Unwin, 1935), pp. 50-1.

57. Ibid.

engaged in helping the G.I.P. Railway employees in their strike and sent to Meerut for trial.

### **Revolutionary Journalism**

The revolutionary journalism was also gathering momentum. Its most glaring example was reflected in the writings of the *Chand* from Allahabad. Its editor, Ram Rikh Singh Sahgal, brought out a special edition of his journal headed as *Guillotine Number* in November 1928. This number was edited by the famous Hindi writer Chatur Sen Shastri. It included special articles on the lives and sacrifices of the prominent revolutionaries and their fight for freedom. For this number S. Bhagat Singh wrote many articles consisted of 80 pages regarding the stalwarts of the *Gadar Party* and other main revolutionaries. The issue contained a number of pictures of the revolutionaries. The young revolutionary Shiv Verma also took special interest in the production of this number.

### **Repression**

No sooner had the Government realized the force of the press as a powerful instrument providing impetus to the national liberation campaign, it started repressing it. Papers like the *Independent* and *Democrat* were not allowed to be printed. Lala Lajpat Rai's *Bande Matram* could only save itself by depositing a security of Rs. 2,000. Both *Pratap* (Kaupur) and *Kesari* forfeited their first security and were given ten days' notice to deposit Rs. 10,000 each or close down. It may be recalled here that in 1919 the Press Association of India had submitted a memorandum to the Government to oppose the operation of the repressive Press Act. It had analyzed the prosecution under the Act in detail. According to its calculation the total number of printing presses and newspapers which were old and had existed before the Act and against which action of some nature or other was taken under the Press Act, was 991. Among these there were 286 cases of warning, many of

which must have sufficed to waste their small finance, or hampered their advance and expansion for ever. The rest were cases of the demand of heavy securities and forfeitures by executive orders whenever the Government thought any publication objectionable. To these had to be added 70 other cases of securities and forfeitures of presses and papers started after the Act. Over 173 new presses and 129 new newspapers expired at their very birth owing to the demand of a security which they could not deposit. The impact of the Act on old presses had been more stifling. Up to 1971, 18 out of 22 newspapers stopped publication after the demand of security. Similarly, during the same period out of 88 old printing presses, nearly 40 had to close down owing to the heavy fines imposed. According to another official return made in 1918, over 500 publications had also been proscribed under the Act. The total amount of securities and forfeitures which was deposited into the Government treasury during the first five years of the Act was nearly 5 lakhs. During the War when the Defence Act was applied the total number of orders under the Act to which presses and papers were subjected for purposes unconnected with the war, were very "large, varied, arbitrary, contradictory, and often ludicrous to a degree."<sup>58</sup>

Protesting against the fresh repression organized during the Non-Co-operation Movement Gandhiji urged the editors of the papers not to deposit the heavy security, to become fearless, defy consequences and to imitate the technique of the *Independent* which prepared handwritten or typed scripts and distributed them in the public. Gandhiji believed that an editor who commanded a client could not be easily hushed so long as his body was left free. He had delivered his finished message as soon as he was put under duress. Gandhiji also added that Tilak had spoken more eloquently from the Mandalay Jail than through the columns of the printed *Kesari*. His

58. *The Report of the Press Commission*, n. 11, pp. 158-59.

influence on Indian public had increased by leaps and bounds by his incarceration. His speech and writing had attained much greater power after he was discharged than before his imprisonment. By his death he was editing his paper without pen and speech through the determined resolution of Indians to realize the mission of his life. Advising the editors to first break the idol of machinery and leaden type Gandhiji continued: "The pen is our foundry and the hands of willing copyists our printing machines. Idolatry is permissible in Hinduisim when it subserves an ideal. It becomes a fetish when the idol itself becomes ideal." Gandhiji also admitted that the handwritten newspaper was a "heroic remedy" meant for heroic times. Being indifferent to the assistance of the printing-room and the compositor's stick ensured their independent retention or restoration for all time. Gandhiji called the existing Press Act a "symptom of the disease of cowardice". In the restoration of the free press along with free speech and association he saw almost the attainment of *Swaraj*. Exposing the so-called liberal attitude of the Government, Gandhiji added:

One by one, pretensions of the Government that the reforms represent more liberty and more concession to popular feeling are dropping out under the stress of circumstances. The pretensions can be justified only if they can stand the test under a severe strain... Liberty of the press can be said to be truly respected only when the press can comment in the severest terms upon and even misrepresent matters; protection against misrepresentation or violence being secured not by an administrative gagging order, not by closing down the press but by punishing the real offender, leaving the press itself...unrestricted.<sup>59</sup>

Like Gandhiji the other non-co-operation editors exhorted the whole press not to refrain from expressing its ideas for

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<sup>59</sup> Mahatma Gandhi, "Liberty of the Press", *Young India* (Ahmedabad) 12 January 1922, Vol. IV, No 2, p. 29.



fear of the Press Act. It should regard it as sinful to keep its ideas strictly clandestine. To do so was the negation of one's calling for an editor. Those who co-operated with the alien regime at this critical juncture, were severely rebuked. There ran one central theme in the columns of this press that the "co-operators uphold injustice and add insult to the national cause".

As a result of the pressure of the nationalist forces and the efforts of the Liberals, some of whom were ministers and members of the Viceroy's Executive Council, the Government started reconsidering its attitude in regard to the press. In March 1921, Sir Tej Bahadur Sapru, in his capacity as Law Member, appointed a committee under his chairmanship. As a result of its deliberations the Repressive Acts of 1908 and 1910 were repealed at the Delhi Session of the Central Legislature in 1922.

But this leniency was not perhaps applicable to the Communist press which was dreaded most for dissemination of Marxist ideas and waging an uncompromising struggle against British Imperialism. In his confidential report submitted in 1924 P.C. Bamford, Deputy-Director of Central Intelligence Bureau, was prompt enough to draw the attention of the India Office that "the number of newspapers in India publishing pro-Bolshevik articles is increasing."<sup>60</sup> Referring to the adequacy of the repressive machinery of the Government he disclosed that the means available to Government to stultify attempts to import Bolshevik arms and literature into India were generally adequate provided prior information of the nature of the attempts was obtained. Neither the Customs nor Postal Departments could be expected, by means of indiscriminate searches of all imports and mails, to detect much prohibited matter and this could only be affected if some indi-

60. *Conviction...in Bolshevik Conspiracy Case*, n. 16, p. 100.

cation was available as to when, where and how the endeavour to import Communist literature was made. He added that the duty of obtaining this information rested with the intelligence system, in the various departments of which there had been a tendency to retrench consequently on financial stringency. Owing to the importance of obtaining information, and the danger of Bolshevik "penetration" and affiliation with revolutionary elements in India, it was necessary to increase rather than to reduce the means required to enable these departments to function. This was particularly necessary with regard to the allotment of secret service funds, for money must be spent if information was to be obtained. Mr. Bamford concluded by saying that the points which demanded special attention were as follows:

### **INTELLIGENCE AND POLICE**

(a) 1. The provision of an understudy to the present officer-in-charge of the Peshawar Intelligence Bureau and an increase of secret service funds there.

2. Either the formation of a Police Intelligence Bureau at Quetta to acquire information all along the Baluchistan-Persian frontier and to link up with the Peshawar Bureau, or the strengthening of the present Quetta Military Intelligence Bureau to enable it to perform these functions.

3. The strengthening of the passport checking staff at Karachi.

4. The provision of greater facilities to the Madras Criminal Investigation Department both in personnel and funds for the collection of information regarding Bolshevik organization and the maintenance of a watch over arrivals at Pondicherry and Dhanushkodi.

5. The possibility of legislation to make the dissemination of Bolshevik doctrines an offence

6. The maintenance of the staff and secret service grant of all criminal Investigation Departments and Intelligence Bureau at least up to the 1922-23 level.

### **CUSTOMS**

(b) 1. The provision of secret service funds to the collectors of Customs at the principal ports to acquire information regarding the import of arms.

2. The increase of rewards in the case of convictions for smuggling arms.

3. The strengthening of the superior staff at Karachi and the provisions of facilities to supervise the work of the Preventive Staff at the small ports on the Sind coast.

### **POSTAL**

(c) The examination at Ballard Pier of all bags made up for India on the Munchen-Kufstien Rufstien Railway section.

## D—FROM ESCAPISM TO ACTION

• *Full of youthful vigour we have come to this earth to give a taste of joy to all fellowmen, because we represent the very spirit of joy. We shall move about on this earth as the living embodiments of joy and mirth. We shall laugh ourselves and make the whole world laugh with us. Wherever we may turn our eyes, the gloom of melancholy will vanish like mist and the living touch at our joy shall remove all maladies and sorrows, and suffering from this earth which, to many, is a veritable vale of tears.... All this joy will turn this earth into an abode of happiness.*

[Subhas Chandra Bose, *Dreams of a Youth* (Calcutta, 1947) p.2].

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### **Escapism and its opposition**

Despite the many socio-political developments in and around India in the first two decades of the twentieth century a large number of people, particularly those residing in the rural areas, remained indifferent towards the necessity of developing a national life in the country. There appeared an absence of any reference to polity in the circles of these people. There appeared to be no provision for corporate and collective action. Theirs was purely a parochial life whose centre and

circumference was the family; citizenship was unknown. The defence of national interests was not even thought of. As already pointed out, a number of factors including a pessimistic outlook towards worldly life and the doctrine of metempsychosis contributed to the perpetuation of this ignorance. Influenced perhaps by the orthodox religious preachings a lot of people appeared to be too much preoccupied with the attainment of *Nirvana*. The continuation of the worldly existence appeared the resultant of the sin or misdeeds committed by them in their previous life. They lived here because God or some other superhuman power had doomed them to live a worldly existence. The sooner freed from this artificial existence the better. This mystical approach was further encouraged by the Pondicherry School of Thought founded by Aurobindo. He believed that man is a transitional being; he is not final. His mind is not the highest possible power of consciousness. Beyond him are certain degrees that take him to a divine supermanhood. Beyond his mind is a supramental or grostic power of consciousness that is in real possession of truth. This supermind is the dynamic consciousness possessing infinite wisdom and will. And the supermind is superman. It is the next distinct evolutionary step to be attained by the nature of the man living in this world. This appeared to be an escapist conviction. The Indian society had thus "burnt its boats and cooped itself up unwisely with a ditch around itself,"<sup>1</sup> It was nothing less than the "nihilism of life."<sup>2</sup> It was creating a mania for self-immolation. This deadness of life in all forms narrowed the vision and created fanaticism. This was an enforcing of the will-power into abnormal channels of mystical inertia. The forces of national reconstruction particularly deplored the Pondicherry School. They considered it a weakness to seek refuge in peaceful contemplation, in *Pranayama* and

1. Comment by N.C. Kelkar, *Indian Quarterly Register*, July-December, 1925 (Calcutta) Vol II p. 354
2. Rabindranath Tagore, "Letters from Abroad," *Modern Review* (Calcutta, 1921) Vol. XXX, p. 305.

*Dhyana*. This was not the lead that people would have to follow if they were to create a new free, happy and great India. <sup>3</sup>

### Role of Gandhiji

One of the most prominent among the constructive forces was Mahatma Gandhi who tried to purge Indian religions, especially Hinduism, of reactionary blemishes. Both by precept and example he expressed in human form the spirit of activism that pervades and guides mankind to carry out its obligations towards this worldly life. He strongly believed that there must be action where there was body. No physically capable man could be exempted from labour. The work was to be done by all for the common benefit. There might be many learned people who could recite the *Vedas*, the *Bible* and the *Quran* from memory, but they might be deeply involved in self-indulgence. The real knowledge of human salvation could be attained only by action which is the *sine qua non* of life in body. In *Young India* dated 20 October, 1921, he published some verses which contained for him the whole truth of action as indispensable sacrament for the India of his day. A short extract from these verses is quoted below:

Work is more excellent than idleness  
 the body's life proceeds not, lacking work....  
 Work! sacrifice! Increase and multiply  
 With sacrifice; This shall be *Kamadhuk*....  
 And rain comes by the pious sacrifice,  
 And sacrifice is paid with tithes of toil....  
 He that abstains to help the rolling wheels

3. Comment made by Subhas Chandra Bose in the session of the All-India Youth Congress held on 25 December 1928; *India Quarterly Register*, July-December 1928 (Calcutta) Vol. II, p.447.

of this great world  
Glutting his idle sense, lives a lost life  
Shameful and vain. <sup>4</sup>

As Gandhiji was essentially a prisoner of certain class interests he emphasized that action should be motivated purely by selfless service. It should remain free from the taint of egoism or attachment. There should be complete devotion. Devotion was not mere lip-worship. It was something like "wrestling with death."<sup>5</sup>

Being basically a man of religion, though Gandhiji had a great reverence for the *Quran*, the *Bible*, the *Zand Avesta* and the *Granth Sahib*, none of these scriptures could move him so much as the *Gita*. In its 700 verses he discovered the real revelation of active human life though he admitted that the revelation was not the exclusive property of any particular nation or religious community. He also contended that the verses in *Gita* did not jeopardize the cause of human welfare. Instead they provided an impetus to those who would be suffering for the nobler aims in life. As a *Satyagrahi* he felt that the *Gita* was ever presenting him with fresh lessons. He hug this idea as richest possession. In his view a true votary of the *Gita* did not know what disappointment was. The *Gita* inculcated the duty of perseverance in the case of apparent unsuccess. It called upon men to dedicate themselves "body, mind and soul" to work and not to be mental voluptuaries at the mercy of all chance desires and indisciplined impulses. <sup>6</sup>

Mahatma Gandhi believed that Shri Krishna's exhortation to Arjuna in the *Gita* would inspire the thought and conduct

4. Jag Parvesh Chandra, ed., *Gita, the Mother*, a collection of writings by Gandhiji (Lahore, 1944) pp.137-38.

5. Ibid, p.7.

6. An extract from a collection of opinions on B.G Tilak, *Srimad Bhagavad Gita Rahasya* (Poona, 1935) Stanz a XV and XVI

of millions. To everyone, high and low, it would carry a message of new active life. It would strengthen every one who was feeble and would uphold him when he was strong irrespective of his age, race or religion. It would urge man in the thick of life's struggle to shed his limitations and apprehensions. It was not the scripture of the next world nor of ascetism. In *Young India* dated 2 February 1928, he exhorted his countrymen to adopt the *Gita* as a "mine of diamonds", as it had been to him; let it be their constant guide and friend in life and give them proper direction and dignify their labour. <sup>7</sup>

His belief in action derived from the *Gita* was largely utilized by him for the activization of the socio-political life of India. He wanted to and did, devote his life for the task of national development. Like Lord Krishna he appeared to give a message to his countrymen : "Be a yogi and fight" for national independence. Like Dayananda Saraswati, Vivekananda, Tilak and Tagore—perhaps in a more intensive and better-organized manner than they—his association and leading of the nationalist movement manifested the high watermark of the progressive realization of the national awakening. He wrote in *Young India* dated 8 April 1924:

My national service is part of my training for freeing my soul from the bondage of flesh...For me the road to salvation lies through incessant toil in the service of my country and there through the humanity. ..I work for India's freedom because my *Swadeshi* teaches me that being born in it and having inherited her culture, I am fittest to serve her and she has a prior claim to my service. <sup>8</sup>

The activization in Gandhiji's life manifested in many spheres, particularly political, with the organization of the Non-Co-operation Movement. The whole country was full of

7. Jag Parvesh Chander, n. 4, p. 49.

8. *Ibid*, pp. 82 & 85.



agitation, which is only another name for life. Life is hope and hope manifests in effort. Perhaps never before in the twentieth century history of India was the national life activated as under the Non-Co-operation which released vast reserves of emotional and spiritual forces and inspired the people with a crusading spirit. The response of the masses was unprecedented and almost unbelievable. They discarded fatalism and passivity. Both the haves and the have-nots were thus actively participating in the struggle for national liberation. The classes and masses appeared to have been restoring the broken contacts. It appeared to be the first step towards the realization of a life free from exploitation. There seemed to be no barrier to human progress. The whole of India seemed to transform its weaknesses into an instrument of strength by eradicating the inertia and inaction of its character. The probability of an active energetic revolution in India did no longer appear to be an improbability. The future appeared to be of abundance and optimism. People appeared to be in a mood to struggle and die rather than submit. An Indian, who returned home after 8 years from abroad, appropriately described this new transformation:

A few months later, in November 1921, I came back. And what was there in sight for me? A change....

At the time I had left India, the people were yet slumbering and were not fully awakened to the realities of the situation though, due to the partition of Bengal, the leaders of the country were much agitated and spared no pains to move their brethren to action. After my long stay in the U.S.A. I returned and saw the people up on their legs and actively working for the uplift of their mother country. I found them moving courageously with handspun, handwoven white *khadar* on their bodies and white caps on their heads, with national flags in their hands and with the slogan 'Swarajya is my birthright and I will have it' on their lips. The people moved briskly from place to place unmindful of all the dust that entered their noses and settled on their white clothes on account of their treading the unmetalled

rough roads, advising their fellow countrymen to help and not cooperate with the ruling power in any way but to remain away from it in order to carry on their national activities very peacefully in a most non-violent manner. I thought that the people had become dare-devils not caring a bit for the threats, blows or whips of the police and the authorities who were behaving most rudely and inhumanly. What a wonderful change had been wrought ! What an effective transformation of cowed down, weak, downtrodden, lifeless slaves....They were full of enthusiasm and buoyant spirit. They seemed to be ready to sacrifice everything they had and to suffer for the cause in order to achieve their goal.

How did this change come over the people ? Whence came the spirit and whose was the magic wand that was used. When I saw the most astonishing transformation, there was no wonder that I felt like Rip Van Winkle who thought he was in a different world ! But I was conscious that I was with my people whom I had left eight years ago. It was Gandhiji, who had caused the people to throw off their yoke and be free from the bondage of British. The Non-violent Non-Cooperation Movement was started by him. It had caught the spirit of the people and had permeated amongst the masses who, by their activities had changed the very look of the country. In clear terms Gandhiji had said, "between virtue and sin, between darkness and light; so, there can be none between the people and a Government opposed to their interests." By means of non-cooperation with the Government he was proving to the world that "even the most wicked policy could not survive, if the people did not tolerate it and refused to be a party to it."

In the pages of an official publication the President of India, V.V. Giri also recalls those hectic days:

The fear of incarceration and the threat of punishment and even of the gallows were totally shaken off and the

whole nation stood as one man to sacrifice everything, ready to do or die for the independence of the Nation. Non-Cooperation had made Gandhiji an undisputed leader and the tide of Nationalism began to spread in every nook and corner of the country. The myth of breaking down people through suppression and punishment was totally exploded.

This enthusiasm reached its climax in an ardent will to freedom and in the collective demand for *Swaraj*. The sense of belonging to the nation appeared to become not only a social but an individual reality too. But Sir Narayan Chandavarkar and others issued a manifesto for dissuading the people from joining the movement. In their view Non-Co-operation was deprecated by the mystic tenets and "traditions" of their "motherland" and all the religions that had saved and elevated the human race.<sup>9</sup> In reply to their criticism Mahatma Gandhi wrote in *Young India* dated 25 August 1920, that the *Bhagwad Gita* was a "gospel of non-co-operation between the force of darkness and those of light." In his view Arjuna representing the right cause was enjoined to engage in "bloody" warfare with the unjust Kauravas.<sup>10</sup>

#### Role of other leaders

Besides Gandhiji there were also other political leaders who played a significant role in making their countrymen discard pessimism. In fact, Jawaharlal Nehru and his father considered all mysticism and metaphysics a non-sense. Both of them actively tried to mould the thinking of their countrymen in this direction. The Patel brothers never bothered about the high spiritualism. Eminent poet-philosopher—Subramaniam Bharati interpreted *Gita* and *puranic* writings to make people active towards worldly life. The speeches and writings of Lala Lajpat Rai are full of exhortations of similar nature. Since his early associat-

9. N. S. Hardiker, "When I felt like Rip Van Winkle", *1921 Movement: Reminiscences* (New Delhi, Publications Division, Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, 1971), pp. 102-03.

10. *Ibid.*, p. 157.

ion with Tilak school of political movement he actively worked for this purpose.<sup>11</sup> In his student days C. R. Das became the leading figure of the students movement in Calcutta. The lives of Mazzini and Garibaldi, Washington and Kossuth inspired

11. It is interesting to recall that during the last years of his life Lala Lajpat Rai could not display the same positive attitude tainted with militant fervour for worldly life. His divided loyalty to nationalism and communalism was perhaps responsible for it. Although he did not totally discard his old adherence to militant nationalism, yet he also could not reconcile himself to the liberal and secular politics of national leaders like Gandhiji. The orgy of communal riots and politics swept him off from the sphere of secular militant nationalism. He joined the Hindu Mahasabha and became a collaborator of Pt. Malaviya in organizing the sectarian movements of *Shuddi* and *Sangathan*. Being a man of moods, he was subject to fits of intense depression. Soon he also began to find fault with Malaviya. His letter written to G.D. Birla from Lahore on 27 October, 1927, was full of criticism of Malaviya, "I regret having ever joined him in forming this Party." [The relevant extract of the letter quoted by G.D. Birla in his memoirs *In the Shadow of the Mahatma* (Orient Longmans Ltd., 1953)p.29.] The other paragraphs of the same letter clearly indicated that Lalaji was very much an upset person by now. His communal scepticism plunged him into the very swamp of despondency. In another letter written to Birla from Poona on 12 July, 1928 he poured out what he regarded a "Lava of pessimism". This letter was one of the most heart-touching documents. A few extracts from the same would provide a source to its pessimistic content: •

I have lost faith in everything – in myself, in God, in humanity, in life, in the world ... Everything seems to be ephemeral and the outcome of human vanity. All my life I have fought and struggled against this doctrine. I have thundered from hundreds of platforms that the doctrine which says, 'this world is false, unreal and a delusion is false.... life is real, life is earnest' – seems to me to be nothing more than the cry of unconscious vanity. What is there in life which is real and which one should take in earnest?...How can I believe in a God which is said to be just and benevolent, all mighty and omniscient, who rules over this absurd world? [*Ibid.*, p. 30].

(footnote contd.)

him so much that the love of the country did not remain with him a mere academic sentiment. It became an active passion and motive power in the formative period of his life. His contact with materialistically grown world during his stay in England for higher studies filled him with new ideas and a new zest for life, which reflected in his earliest collection of poems, *The Garden*. The most important lyric poems in this collection, which created a furore in public were *My God* and *The Vagabond*. The latter poem was the glorification and idealization of the life of a vagabond woman encircled as it was with cruelties, disenchantments and shame. The former poem showed the strong faith of the writer in atheism and represented a cry in revolt against creation with its voiceless, insoluble mysteries. Despite persistent questioning about the miseries and misfortunes of the worldly life his God was dumb and dead. To all eager questions his only answer was internal silence. For such a God the poet had no use. By 1904 C.R. Das revolted against atheism and

(previous footnote contd.)

Comradeship, affection of near and dear even, had deserted him, he felt. Neither he any longer bothered about them nor they about him. Lalaji continued to express his confused disillusionment :

I know the habit of too much analysis, or tearing things into pieces, is bad. It does not lead to pleasantness. Yet I often find myself in a hyper-critical mood. No one comes up to my ideals. I admire Gandhiji, I admire Malaviyaji but I often myself indulge in bitter criticism of them. Public life, public activities, public engagements are no longer alluring; they do not attract me; they do not please me.... Oh ! What am I to do ? I am miserable. I am lonely, I am unhappy, yet I hug my miserableness, my loneliness and my unhappiness [*Ibid*, p.30].

This does not, however, mean that pessimism and dejection became a perpetual phase of his life. Very soon he again become positive towards worldly life by actively leading the anti-Simon demonstration at Lahore and braved the lathi-blows of the police. Before meeting a martyr's death as a result of these blows the 'Punjab Lion' again roared, "Every lathi-blow on my chest will prove to be a nail in the coffin of British Empire."

moved towards Vaishnavism, when he published his fresh collection of poems *The Garland*. Nevertheless, his *Vaishnavism* was not of an orthodox and escapist type. "In our oppressed and down-trodden fellow-bretheren let us recognise the image of *Narayana*: before that sacred and awful image, let us abandon all false pride", said he in a peculiarly mystical language used by him in his presidential address delivered at the Bengal Provincial Conference held at Calcutta in April 1917.<sup>12</sup>

In his younger days Sankaracharya's creed of *Maya* had greatly influenced Subhash Chandra Bose. He believed that the doctrine of *Maya* expressed comprehensively the quintessence of knowledge. In the mean time by chance he got hold of the works of Swami Vivekananda. The reading of this collection changed his outlook. The ideal set by Swami Vivekananda appeared to be most practical advice to him. The essence of his teachings—in your salvation you do not forget the service of humanity and your own country—inspired him most. "I was thrilled", writes Subhash in his memoirs, "to the marrow of my bones."<sup>13</sup> With the adoption of this outlook the monasticism of the middle ages and the utilitarianism of the present as propounded by Bentham appeared to him selfish and imperfect. He ceased to be an absolutist and turned out to be much more of a pragmatist. To him the reality of life appeared to be incompatible with the doctrine of *Maya*. What was the value of *yoga*, he thought, if so much misery was to perpetuate in society. Instead sister Nivedita's famous comment on Swami Vivekananda: "The queen of his adoration was his motherland", became his ideal. Further experience opened a new world before him and revealed the condition of real India of villages beset with poverty, ill-health and illiteracy. It made him a rebel against the prevailing monotonous life. No longer he remained a goody-goody boy

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12. *Deshbandhu Chitta Ranjan*, a collection of his speeches (Calcutta, 1926) p. 62.

13. Subhash Chandra Bose, *An Indian Pilgrim* (Calcutta, 1948) p. 42.

afraid of annoying his parents. The dedication to the national cause appeared to him more noble, inspiring and lofty.<sup>14</sup>

Thereafter the way in which Subhash succeeded in moulding his environment in the direction of his ideal, needs no description. He chose a life of service and hardship--a life engaged in the task of national reconstruction. The emphasis on nationalism was inevitable. In spite of his radical leanings he could not get rid of metaphysics and did not develop an outlook based on the scientific process of historical materialism. In his younger days he founded the neo-Vivekananda group with the object of establishing a synthesis between religion and nationalism in practical life. One of the main activities of the group was to collect new ideas on philosophy, history and nationalism and to pass them over to the other colleagues in the group. These youthful activities reflected the spirit of his writings contributed years later to organize the youth in India. He had described their abundant enthusiasm thus:

There is no power on earth that can stop the onward rush of life in us. Let doubt and despair block our way like a mountain, let the antagonism of entire mankind try to resist us, still our joyful march shall continue all the same....We may commit blunders, we may go astray, we may stumble down but we...never flinch.<sup>15</sup>

The youth of Subhash' conception had discovered the new creed of nationalism for reshaping the life of their people. With their youthful vigour they gave a touch of freshness to what was outmoded and worn out. They infused life into the lifeless.

Along with his engagement in active politics Subhash also produced patriotic writings. He emphasized that when a

14. *Ibid*, p. 128. For detailed study see his letters to his parents and brothers, pp. 125-35.

15. Subhash Chandra Bose, *Dreams of a Youth* (Calcutta, 1947) pp. 2-4.

nation had forfeited all claims to exist, whose vitality had been fully spent up, it would obviously and inevitably face its disappearance or willy-nilly drag on a useless existence, "no better than that of a worm", so that there would rarely be any trace of its existence outside the pages of history.<sup>16</sup> The author had, however, full faith in the survival of the Indian nation. He witnessed in its vital power the optimistic note of resurrection despite its downfall many times in the past. He justified its perpetual existence in the creative power of its civilization.

To renew the same creative power of the nation Subhash Bose called upon his countrymen to inculcate self-confidence, emotional fervour and a dynamic imagination. With the imbibing of these qualities the Indians had been able to nurture great ideals in the midst of many failures, frustrations and numerous other unbelievable difficulties and odds. And he had optimistic faith that the countrymen of his days could also suffer without any grudge in the pursuit of their ideals. No amount of repression by external or internal enemies could crush their Indian spirit because "a nation inspired by a spirit of idealism will happily face all pains and tortures for its attainment. He advised them to imbibe the spirit of *Gita* that it was better to die for one's own convictions. What was foreign to one's nature was always a source of peril. To those who believed that suffering was an unmixed evil, nothing but a torturing experience, he exhorted them to consider it a source of infinite happiness. To those who had suffered without grumbling, he told that their suffering at once became something noble and inspiring, and instead of demoralizing it made them even stronger and nobler. Joy was created out of one's devotion to the ideal of national reconstruction. The real importance of the worldly existence was revealed in such circumstances. To strengthen his argument he quoted the following passage from a Russian novel with a view to address his own countrymen:

16 *Ibid*, pp. 14-15.



There is much suffering in store for the people, much of their blood will yet flow, squeezed out by the hand of greed; but for all that, all my suffering, all my blood is a small price for that which is already stirring in my breast, in my mind, in the marrow of my bones. I am already rich as a star is rich in the golden rays. <sup>17</sup>

Continuing his inspiring messages to those who were not hopeful of success he wrote from Jail on 6 February 1926 that if their life came suddenly to an abrupt end and they might not probably leave behind them any permanent mark on society, they should not worry. Even if they failed to attain in life and put into practice their ideals, still let them feel that they had not lived in vain. They died for something.<sup>18</sup>

These teachings influenced the life of many in India. Spell-bound by patriotic appeals a large number of them participated in the struggle for national independence and rotted in jail without trial. Numerous men and women suffered the pangs of separation from their relations, imprisoned far away in jails and

17. *Ibid*, p. 20. In his "Appeal to the Citizens" issued from the Mandalay Jail on 24 September 1927, Subhash again wrote :

For long, long months I am cut off from the sacred soil of my motherland; but I have this satisfaction that my incarceration has not been in vain. All my sufferings have blossomed into a rose of the deepest hue.... India, the land of dreams, the land of hallowed memories, appears from a distance, more fascinating than ever in all her beauty and splendour. My exile has served as a veritable touchstone which has made me worthier day by day for that ideal of supreme sacrifice....I feel hallowed by the realization of that eternal truth which we breathe in our rivers and fields, and that vital spirit of the land which has found expression in the creative works of numerous poets and artists and men of genius from Bankim to Deshbandhu. I now understand what a rare fortune and signal honour it is, to dare and suffer for a motherland like mine. [*Ibid*, pp. 135-36].

18. *Ibid*. p. 136.

subjected to daily humiliations at the hands of jail authorities. But they suffered all this because they wanted to see their nation to rise on modern scientific lines after its liberation from the alien domination. There could be no greater fulfilment of their life's mission than by sacrificing themselves for "Mother India." They did not take up politics as a mere temporary vocation. They prepared themselves for all sort of trials and tribulations that were inevitably the lot of a political worker in a nation controlled by an alien power. In their view the existing social, cultural and moral values had no meaning unless all of them were harnessed and utilized for the national independence.

Among the Muslim nationalists the leaders like the Ali Brothers, Maulana Abul Kalam Azad, Dr. M. A. Ansari, Hakim Ajmal Khan and others were very much inspired by the *Asrar-i-Khudi* (secrets of the self) written by Iqbal. The book was the *Gita* of the Muslims. Seeking their clue from this one of the most significant writings they tried their best to revitalize the life of their countrymen, particularly the co-religionists.

### Marxism

It is also to be remembered that for the first time the Marxist ideas began to permeate the indigenous society. The adherents of Marxism put forward an analysis of the Indian society based upon the scientific process of historical materialism which is the theory of social development as formulated by Karl Marx. According to this theory, social phenomena, like all natural phenomena, are also governed by a law. And this law is that in the social production of their means of life, human beings enter into definite and necessary relations which are independent of their will. The totality of these production relations constitutes the economic structure of society, the real basis upon which a legal and political superstructure arises, and to which definite forms of social consciousness correspond. The mode of production of the material means of life determines, in general, the social, political and intellectual processes of life. It is not the consciousness of human beings which deter-

mines their existence. It is their social existence, which determines their consciousness.

Inspired by these Marxist formulations of political and social development of human society the early theoreticians and pioneers of Marxism in India took cudgels against all those obscurantist, metaphysical and feudal conceptions which made possible the sustenance of exploitation. M.N. Roy's writings like *India in Transition* were the early attempts in this direction. In 1926 there was also published the booklet the *Hundred Per Cent Indian*. Its author, C.G. Shah, fought vigorously against all those who idealized the pre-modern Indian Society. He remarked:

As good socialists, we do recognise—in fact we proclaim and denounce most eloquently and in scathing terms that leisure achieved as a result of the development of the productive forces of humanity has hitherto been the monopoly of a class, of the class which owns the productive forces. We also know that this culture, evolved by the master class had a distinct class bias and had been used by them to justify and perpetuate their rule....We should rather, strive for realizing such a social order that the productive forces do not remain the monopoly of a section of the community and are exploited to their maximum possibilities on the basis of a scientific economic plan of production and co-operative labour. <sup>19</sup>

Further progress in the direction of popularising the materialistic conception of culture and civilization was made through the writings of eminent scholars like Rahul Sankrityayan, Saklatwala, R.P. Dutt and S.A. Dange. Some of the most readable writings by these eminent figures were *Dvandatamak Bhoutikvad*, *India Today and Tomorrow*, *India: From Primitive Communism to Slavery*.

19. C. G. Shah, *Marxism-Gandhism-Stalinism* (Bombay, Popular Prakashan, 1963) p. 257.

## APPENDICES

### A

*Extracts from the statement of Defence Counsel, Dr. Mani Lal, in Cawnpore Bolshevik Conspiracy case on 9 May 1924:*

[The final stage of arguments in the Bolshevik "Conspiracy" case] was reached on 9 May 1924. Dr. Manilal, concluding his plea on behalf of Shaukat Osmani and Muzaffar Ahmad, referred to the contents of the Bolshevik literature alleged to have been received by his clients, and urged there was no harm in holding communistic views. He also contended:]

Imperialism did not mean sovereignty of His Majesty over India. It was simply a political aspect of capitalism. If, therefore, M.N. Roy had in one of his journals cried down imperialism, there was nothing objectionable ... nor was there any remote hint of depriving His Majesty of sovereignty of India. Communism was nothing but an attempt to bridge the wide gulf that existed between capitalists and labourers in the matter of wealth and power. Nobody should take any objection to this laudable aim of the Communists, nor to their attempts to bring about solidarity among themselves. International solidarity of the proletariat was not to be afraid of any more than a motor car or steam engine. Why? In fact, the object of the various international labour conferences at Geneva was nothing else than solidarity of labouring classes. Some people might have wanted complete separation of India from imperialistic Britain, they had no quarrel with the King Emperor over his sovereignty of India.

[Dr. Manilal asked :] Where is the mention in any of the correspondence produced in court of depriving His Majesty of the sovereignty of India ? It is not His Majesty who is opening shops in India, running mills in Cawnpore or Bombay, or coming to administer the Civil Service. Even if all the British traders in India and all civil and military officers became communists, His Majesty will still continue to be the sovereign. His Majesty has survived all the revolutions in England since the time of William the Conqueror, notwithstanding the gradual acquisition of power, first by barons, then by the Commons, and now as a first step by the people. Surely, the Communist Party in Great Britain does not mean to deprive His Majesty of his sovereignty, but the Indian bureaucracy and those who exploit labour are pleased to see use of Section 121 (A) against those who appear to them to upset their scheme of money getting. If the accused in court are conspirators and must be punished, then the East India Company which conspired to deprive the Indian princes of their country, ought to have been prosecuted. Surely, the East India Company did not come to India out of spiritual or religious motives. But there is a great deal of prejudice against Communism here in India. Why, the very house where I am staying at Cawnpore was described by some as rendezvous of Communists.

The Judge (to counsel): "You are going too far. Come to the point."

[Continuing his argument the Counsel said :] "If an attempt to spread Communism was to be treated as an offence of conspiracy to overthrow British Rule, then the spread of Hinduism or Mahomedanism was also an attempt to deprive the King Emperor of his sovereignty."

[*Times of India* (Bombay) 9 May 1924, p. 1; *A Bolshevik Conspiracy Trial* (Bombay, *Times of India Publications*), pp.90-2 ]

## B

*Extracts from the joint statment, delivered by S. Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt on 8 June 1929 in the court of sessions Judge :*

Our active opposition is towards that institution (Assembly) which has not only been proving itself worthless since its birth but also destructive due to its cruel power. The more we think on this problem, the more it fortifies our belief that this institution is exhibiting before the world that India is very backward and helpless. Thus this institution symbolizes tyranny, irresponsibility and autocracy.

The representatives of the people have reiterated the national demands before this House several times but they simply ended in smoke. Whatever suitable resolutions were passed in the House they were trampled under the feet, and humiliated in this very Parliament. The measures that were adopted in the House against repressive laws of the government and the resolutions concerning settlement of disputes through mediation were disregarded, and irrespective of vehement resistance by the elected representatives towards the governmental proposals and measures the latter were enacted into laws.

In short, in spite of our numerous efforts we could not detect a legitimate reason for the existence of such an institution....When in the joint session of two legislatures Lord Irwin referred to bomb explosion and said : "It is an attack not on an individual but the constitution itself", we immediately believed that the object of the incident had been properly appraised.

This institution which has been built up with great pomp and show at the cost of the sweated labour of millions of Indians—is totally hollow and preposterous.

We continued thinking on all these issues. In the end the introduction of the Trade Disputes Bill empowering the

wholesale arrest of trade union leaders forced us to enter into the Assembly Hall so that we could listen to the discussion on that Bill. After having heard that our belief was confirmed that we should not expect anything from the government symbolizing the repressive policy of exploiters and the power to enslave the workers. Moreover, the way the representatives of the whole nation were put to insult and millions of starving and struggling people were deprived of their fundamental right of economic prosperity, we took it for barbarous and cruel treatment.

Those who have thought like us they cannot sit silently. Their soul is pinning for such sufferers who silently built up the economic structure of this exploiting class with their blood. The government is the greatest parasite among all these parasites, which can thus crush the voice of our aggrieved soul.

In this connection, we kept in view the words of C.R. Das, the former Law Member of the Governor-General's Executive Council, which he expressed to his son in that famous letter. Therein he said : "England needs the explosion of a bomb to wake her up from the dreamful sleep." Therefore, we exploded a bomb in the Parliament on behalf of those who had no other alternative to express their heartfelt grief. In doing so our main purpose was to make the dumb hear our voice and those who are overlooking the reality may be warned in time.

Others also felt, as we did, that a horrible storm is in the offing in the great ocean of the emotions of the Indian people. We have unfurled the flag of the coming danger for those who are marching ahead without bothering about dangers in the future. We have sounded the end of that age of utopian non-violence whose futility has been fully understood by the newly surging generation.

- We surrendered ourselves purposely. So that we may face the consequences of our deed. And the imperialist exploi-

ters may come to know that by crushing individuals they cannot crush the ideas. By crushing two simple individuals the nation cannot be crushed. We want to declare at the peak of our voice that let the people understand this lesson of history that the revolutionary movement in France could not be trampled by the warrants issued under the signatures of the French King or by the threatening postures of sending to Bastiles jail.

.....If no heed was paid to our warning a fierce battle will ensue against today's policy of the Government—a policy that is acting as a stumbling block will be destroyed so that the way for revolution is paved by establishing the rule of the proletariat and peasant. Revolution is such a right of mankind that it knows no compromise....We are ready to face all hardships for such an objective and principle. We are determined to lighten the sacred lamp of our youth on its altar, because no sacrifice is great to attain this mighty objective. We will patiently wait for the Revolution. Long Live Revolution.

[From the text Cited by Vishwanath Vaishampamyan, *Amar Shahid Chander Shekhar Azad*, Vols. II & III (Mirzapore, Krantikari Prakashan Mala, 1967), pp. 292-303.]

## C

*An extract entitled "Victory or Death" from the Manifesto of the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association distributed all over the country on 26 January 1930 :*

There is no crime that Britain has not committed in India. Deliberate misrule has reduced us to paupers, has bled us white. As a race and as a people we stand dishonoured and outraged. . . .Our slavery is our shame. When shall we have courage and wisdom enough to be able to shake ourselves free of it ? What is our great heritage of our civiliza-



tion and culture worth if we have not enough self-respect left in us to prevent us from bowing surveillance to the commands of foreigners and paying homage to their King and flag.... Do people still expect us to forget and forgive. We shall have our revenge—a people's righteous revenge—on the tyrant. Let cowards fall back and cling for compromise and peace. We ask not for mercy and we give no quarter. Ours is a war to the end; to victory or death. Long Live Revolution.

Kartar Singh

President

[From the text cited by Vishwanath Vaishampayan, *Amar Shahid Chander Shekhar Azad*, Vols. II & III (Mirzapore, Krantikari Prakashan Mala, 1967), p. 328.]

## D

*An official letter referring to the reactionary and anti-nationalist Proclamations by State princes on the subject of so-called seditious agitation:*

[In sharp contradiction to the letters and statements inserted in the earlier appendices is this official letter giving the gist of the loyalty declarations to British Imperial Rule made by a large number of former State princes. Actually this document is related to the period covered by the first volume. But by time the author got hold of it, the first volume had already been printed. However, the inclusion of the document in second volume does not make a substantial difference as the approach of most of the princes, honourable exceptions apart, continued to be anti-nationalist and reactionary also in the period covered by this volume.]

**No. 17 of 19/0.**

**Government of India  
Foreign Department-Internal**

**To**

**The Right Hon'ble Viscount Morley of Blackburn, O.M.  
His Majesty's Secretary of State for India.**

**Fort William,**

**27th January 1910.**

**My Lord,**

We have the honour to forward, for the information of His Majesty's Government, the accompanying copies of the proclamations issued by the Durbars mentioned in the margin on the subject of the seditious agitation.

**(★) Central India**

**Dewas (Senior and Junior Branches), Gwalior, Jaora,  
Narsingarh, Orchha, Rajgarh, Sailana.**

**RAJPUTANA**

**Bharatpur, Bundi, Dholpur, Dungarpur, Jaipur, Jhalawat,  
Jodhpur (Marwar), Karauli, Kota, Shahpura, Sirohi, Udaipur  
(Mewar).**

**KASHMIR, MYSORE, NEPAL, PATIALA AND  
RAMPUR.**

2. Your Lordship will observe that while some of these proclamations merely give expression to a general warning against participation in the seditious movement, others such as those\* issued by the Durbars of Gwalior, Jaipur, Bharatpur and Kota, contain specific legislation directed against the holding of seditious meetings, the printing and publishing of seditious literature and similar offences. The Gwalior Durbar

have in addition made punishable the possession within the limits of the State of the following newspapers:—

*The Kesari, Kal, Hindi Punch, Rashtramat, Bhala, Anrita Bazar Patrika, Bengalee, Bande Mataram, Punjabi, Swarajya, Mahratta and Desh-sewak.* The Jaipur Durbar have in like manner prohibited the possession in Jaipur of newspapers and other literature of this class by the issue of a gazette notification of which a copy is enclosed. (Enclosure No. 15.) While the Governments of His Highness the Nizam of Hyderabad, the Marwar (Jodhpur) and Bikaner Durbars have consulted our local officers with a view to the adoption of similar measures. The Mysore Durbar has passed a special regulation for the control of newspapers and other printed matter. With the enclosed \*\*\*Enclosure No. 25 a copy of this enactment will be found. A copy of the debate on the subject in the Mysore Legislative Assembly is also enclosed.

3. Acts based upon our Explosive Substances Act, 1908 (VI of 1908) have in addition been promulgated by the Durbar metioned in the margin. "Central India."

Bhaisunda Jagir, Bhopal, Dhar, Dewas (Junior Branch), Gwalior, Indor, Jaora, Jaso Jagir, Nagod, Ratlama, Sitamau, Sohawal.

#### RAJPUTANA.

Bikaner, Dholuf, Jodhpur (Marwar), Tonk.

#### PUNJAB

#### JIND

(Enclousre No. 4.)

A Copy of the Act

c

Passed by the Gwalior Durbar, to which the rest bear a general resemblance, is inclosed for Your Lordship's information. The Raja of Baraundha and the Jagirdars of Pahara and Paldeo in Central India have announced their intention of introducing similar enactments.

4. His Highness the Raja of Jind has also applied the Newspapers (Incitement to Offences) Act, 1908 (VII of 1908), to his State, and His Highness the Nawab of Tonk has passed a similar Regulation for his territory. An Act (Copy enclosed) (Encloure No. 18) providing against the spread of seditions and for the preservation of public tranquillity in the State has been passed by the Marwar (Jodhpur) Durbar, and legislative measures with a similar object have been initiated by His Highness the Maharaja of Kishangarh, who has directed his Council to include in the schedule of penal offences in the State all acts and omissions which have been made penal in British India under the Explosive Substances Act, 1908 (VII of 1908), the newspapers (Incitements to Offences) Act, 1908 (VII of 1908) and the prevention of Seditious Meetings Act, 1907 (VI of 1907).

In October last, we received information that the Patiala Durbar had caused some 53 persons including certain officials of the State to be arrested on charges of seditions. A further communication will be made when details relating to the case and the results of the trial are available.

**WE HAVE THE HONOUR TO BE,  
MY LORD,**

Your Lordship's most obedient, humble servants,

Signed Minto, O.M. Creagh

J.O. Miller, W.L. Harvery

G. Fleetwood Wilson, S.P. Sinha,

H.H. Risley.

N. 204—IA.

A copy of the foregoing despatch, with enclosures is forwarded to the Home Department for information.

By order, etc.

G.B. Howell.

Asstt. Secy. to the Govt. of India.

Foreign Department,  
Fort William, the 27th January 1910.

List of Enclosures in Despatch No. 17 (Internal), Dated the 27th January 1910, from the government of India in the Foreign Department to His Majesty's Secretary of State for India :—

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S.No. Description of papers.

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1. Text of a speech delivered by His Highness the Raja of Dewas (Senior Branch) on the subject of sedition.
2. Text of the speech delivered by His Highness the Raja of Dewas (Junior Branch) on the subject of sedition.
3. Proclamation issued by His Highness the Maharaja of Gwalior and Act passed by the Durbar relating to sedition.
4. Act passed by the Gwalior Durbar relating to explosive substances.
5. Proclamation by the Jaora Durbar against sedition.
6. Text of a speech delivered by His Highness the Raja of Narsingarh on the subject of sedition.
7. Message to his people from his Highness the Maharaja of Orchha against sedition.
8. Proclamation by the Rajgarh Durbar against sedition.
9. Proclamation by the Sailana Durbar against sedition.
10. Proclamation by the Bharatpur Durbar containing provisions directed against the holding of seditious meetings, the printing or publishing of seditious matter, and the manufacture, import, and export of explosive substances.
11. Proclamation by the Bundi Durbar directed against sedition, and on the subject of explosives.

12. Act passed by the Dholpur Durbar for the prevention of sedition.
13. Proclamation issued by the Dungarpur Durbar prohibiting seditious practices and the possession and manufacture of explosive substances for unlawful purposes.
14. Proclamation by the Jaipur Durbar containing provisions directed against the holding of seditious meetings, the printing or publishing of seditious matter and the manufacture, import, and export of explosive substances.
15. Notification published by the Jaipur Durbar prohibiting the circulation of certain objectionable newspapers in Jaipur territory.
16. Proclamation by the Jhalawar Durbar containing provisions directed against the holding of seditious meetings, the printing or publishing of seditious matter, and the manufacture, import and export of explosive substances.
17. Proclamation against sedition from His Highness the Maharaja of Jodhpur (Marwar) to his subjects.
18. Act passed by the Jodhpur (Marwar) Durbar against sedition
19. Proclamation by the Karauli Durbar containing provisions directed against the holding of seditious meeting, the printing or publishing of seditious matter and the manufacture, import, and export of explosive substances.
20. Proclamation by the Kota Durbar containing provisions directed against the holding of seditious meetings, the printing or publishing of seditious matter, and the manufacture, import, and export of explosive substances.
21. Proclamation by the Raja Dhiraj of Shahpura against sedition and the possession of explosive substances.
22. Proclamation by the Sirohi Durbar against sedition.

23. Proclamation issued by the Udaipur (Mewar) Durbar prohibiting seditious practices and the possession and manufacture of explosive substances for unlawful purposes.
24. Proclamation by the Kashmir Durbar against sedition.
25. Special Regulation passed by the Mysore Durbar for the control of newspapers.
26. Proclamation by the Nepal Durbar excluding the ingress into the State of persons holding political views subversive of good government.
27. Speech delivered by His Highness the Maharaja of Patiala against sedition.
28. Proclamation by the Rampur Durbar against sedition.

J.B. Wood,

Deputy Secretary to the government of India.

[Home Dept. Pol. B., Feb. 1910, No 13, pp. 3-6.]

## E

*Extracts from the reminiscences of Prince of Wales  
about his visit to India in 1921:*

Yet, for all that, Gandhi's ominous shadow fell often across my path: and especially in the native sections of the swarming cities the struggle for the loyalties of the masses seemed to me to be a building match between the Government of India on the one hand and Gandhi on the other. The Indians love a "tamasha". Whatever their feelings on the injustices of British rule, they found it hard to resist the great public shows being organized in my honour. In an effort to overcome simple curiosity and scatter the crowds that otherwise would be hailed as proof of the loyalty of the Indian masses to the British Raj, Mahatma Gandhi and his followers went to rather unusual lengths of intimidation and bribery. Storekeepers

along the routes of my procession were ordered to close their shops, students to boycott their classrooms, and the rest to remain out of sight in their homes. The Party men spread the rumour that the police had been ordered to shoot any native who approached the route of my procession. It was even said that the Government would poison the food at the "feeding of the poor." The dispensing of this bounty was customary on the occasion of a visit by the Viceroy or by some other exalted person. Whenever it was proclaimed in my honour, Gandhi's lieutenants would circulate a warning among the natives that the free food had been poisoned, adding a diabolical story in explanation. This stated in essence that, having been appalled and shocked by the evidences of widespread poverty, I had commanded the Government of India to remedy the conditions without delay and that the authorities embarrassed by my Royal command, had decided to eliminate hunger at a stroke with a mass poisoning of the poor ...

...at Allahabad, an industrial centre, and at the sacred city of Benares, a centre of Hindu learning, on the Ganges was the hartal visibly effective. Allahabad was then the political stronghold of Gandhi's chief lieutenant Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, later to be Premier of India; and the British authorities, hoping to disorganize the boycott, had on the eve of my visit clapped Pandit Nehru and his principal associates in jail. But as matters turned out, an opposite effect was produced.

When on the appointed day, I emerged from the train, in full-dress uniform, and started from the railway station in a State carriage, it was to be met in the native city by shuttered windows and ominous silence along the troop-lined, deserted streets. It was a spooky experience. I attempted to maintain a rigid and majestic pose in the carriage in order to show that I had risen above the insult.... Pandit Nehru had no doubt scored a victory over the Government.

...But, while I was still not so naive as to suppose that the India won by Clive had been saved through my exertions



on the polo field of Allahabad, I was thereafter inclined to take with a grain of salt the newspaper accounts of hostile demonstrations against the British Raj. But in spite of the pleasure of the polo I was puzzled and worried, as the following exchange of letters with my father indicates:

Nepal, The Prince of Wales's Camp  
16th December, 1921

Dearest Papa,

....Well I must at once tell you that I am very depressed about my work in India as I don't feel that I am doing a scrap of good; in fact I can say that I know I am not. The main reason for this is naturally the boycotting of my visits to the various cities in British India by the non-co-operators but another reason is the police....No one realises better than I do that precautions have to be taken on a tour of this sort....But I do assure you that they (the police) are overdoing these precautions and that they have the wind up unnecessarily; I'm the first to recognise what a splendid force the I.P. are & have talked to & congratulated many of the British officers & native constables. But the fact remains that by taking too great care of me they aren't helping me. I am hardly ever allowed even to drive through the bazar & native quarters of the cities & the crowds, if there are any lining the routes through the European quarters, are herded together into pens like sheep & guarded by constables who face "outboard" (with their backs to me) so as to watch them. Such severe police tactics can scarcely be conducive to encouraging even loyal natives to come & see & welcome the P. of W. Can they ?

Ever your most devoted son  
DAVID

York Cottage, Sandringham, Norfolk  
Jan. 25th, 1922

Dearst David,

.....I greatly regret that it (the situation in India) should have changed so rapidly for the worse since we were there only 10 years ago. The war & the situation in Turkey & Montagu's reforms have no doubt produced the unrest which now exists....

I quite understand that you are depressed & discouraged by what you have seen, the way that the natives have boycotted you, in different places where they have been intimidated by Gandhi. But I assure you, in spite of it all, you have done & are doing good work for the Empire & your visit is really giving great pleasure to the natives although they are not allowed to show it. Anyhow the Anglo-Indians have given you a splendid reception everywhere & so have the Native States. The Princes are all loyal & if there was real trouble they would at once come to the assistance of the Govt. with all their troops, which is quite a different situation to what it was before the Munity in 1857 ...

Ever my dear boy,

Yr. most devoted Papa

G. R. I.

Yet, whenever I entered the territories of the native States, Mahatma Gandhi's menacing influence disappeared....

\* \* \* \*

....Curiously, the thing about India that I remember most today—was the smell, compounded of the myriad odours of heavily perfumed flowering trees and shrubs, of the sunbaked earth, of Oriental spices, and of burning dung, of the pungent aroma of ghee in millions of cooking-pots, of domestic animals.

and humaniny in the mass. This smell was more fragrant than offensive and pervaded everything.

*[A King's Story : The Memoirs of H.R.H., the Duke of Windsor K.G. (London, Casell & Co. Ltd., 1951), pp. 169-74].*

## F

*Text of the Letter written by M.N. Roy, dated January 1923 and addressed to Shri C.R. Das, Calcutta :*

[Replying to the summons issued by the Cawnpore Courts to produce the original of the letter, a copy of which was put in last week, Mr. C.R. Das wrote on the summons that he had not got the letter in question, nor had he any recollection of ever having received any such letter. If it was delivered to him it must have been destroyed by his secretary or clerk under general instructions given by him.

The letter to Mr. Das, a photographed copy of which was produced in Court, was headed, "Not the masses for revolution, but revolution for the masses", and was signed, M.N. Roy. The letter was as follows :]

It is needless to point out to you that Gaya marked the close of the period of our movement. The tendencies which constituted the innate weakness of the non-co-operation campaign have proved supreme in the Congress. The consequences are easily to be anticipated. Non-co-operation as a political force is dead. Of course, I mean the Gandhi brand of politics and it has converted the traditional organ of national struggle (the Congress) into a prayer hall or a conclave of theologians.

[After pointing out the impotency of the Moderates after 1907 the letter went on to say that] there were but two ways ahead—reversion to the constitutional democracy of the Liberals or the adoption of the more revolutionary methods. It was

necessary to make a retrospective study. One lesson that must have been learnt by all forward-looking people was the conflict of class interests weakening and strengthening their movement simultaneously, or, in other words, it had become evident that India was not free from those inexorable laws of history which gave rise to great revolutions in various epochs. The Congress had never been a compact political organ, and it became less so in the last year, but the time had come when their fight could not be carried on without the cohesive political parties carrying the standard of the various social classes objectively antagonistic to the imperialistic exploitation. Without a party with a revolutionary outlook, the tactics of breaking the Councils could hardly be carried on successfully.

### OUR ALLY--REVOLUTION

Dissociated from the question of Council entry, your programme will rally all the available revolutionary elements within and without the Congress, thus marking a beginning of the revolutionary mass party. There are three distinct social elements operating in the National movement as represented by the Congress, namely the upper middle classes including intellectuals, the lower middle class small traders, petty intellectual workers, etc. and the masses of the Indian movement which needs an international affiliation and support. But it is a mistake to look upon any foreign (bourgeois) Government for this support, because the struggle for freedom of any subject people signifies a challenge against the right of imperialism which is the basis of all great powers. Our ally, therefore, is the revolutionary forces operating within imperialist countries. The party of Indian workers and peasants, in alliance with the victorious proletariat of Russia, and the nearly victorious proletariat of other countries, will lead our struggle for national freedom to its ultimate victory. I suppose you have received a letter to the Gaya Congress from the world Congress of

Communist international. From this you will have seen that, in any international aspect, I have succeeded.

### REAPING TIME

Now it is up to you to reap the benefit of this success. The Indian National Congress need not go begging for sympathy at the doors of opportunist *bourgeois* Governments. It can count upon the unflinching support of the most powerful revolutionary body of the world workers and peasants. The upper middle class democrats stand very close to the co-operating Liberals and have always lent rather a half-hearted adhesion to the non-co-operation movement. Their quarrel consists in that the Reform Act did not make sufficient provision for the class represented by them, hence, their opposition to the reforms. The lower middle class, apparently led by bankrupt intellectuals, but in fact dominated by reactionary religious and theological ideals, is in an unenviable position. They would like to see society hard back to those primitive conditions to which they ascribe the glories of the golden age. The present schism in the Congress ranks is based upon the conflict between the first two elements namely, the upper middle class and revivalists. But it is the third which is going to decide the fate of the nation and the future belongs to it. To begin an organisation of this party -- the peoples party -- based upon the economic interests of the masses and conducted on the principles of direct action by organised workers and peasants is the task of all those who are not satisfied with the decisions taken at Gaya and are sincerely anxious to push forward our struggle for national freedom.

### THE FUNDAMENTAL ISSUE

The fundamental issue involved in the transition through which the Congress is passing is not a conflict between the upper and lower middle classes. None of these two elements is able and willing to rise up to that height of revolutionary

outlook which alone is capable of dragging the Congress out of the rut it has sunk into. I am of opinion that the new party should leave the conflict between the interests of the lower and upper middle classes aside and go straight into the root question, namely, is purely-bourgeois politics capable of developing our struggle ? Therefore the social basis of our movement must be radically changed. The change should be so formulated as to actively involve into the movement those social forces that are objectively revolutionary, namely, the workers and peasants.

*[The Times of India (Bombay) 31 March 1924, p. 13.]*

## G

*Excerpts from the letters and statements by Jawaharlal Nehru on Nehru Report :*

1. Personally I have had enough of this All Parties Conference (at Delhi). After ten days of it the strain was too great for me and I fled to avoid riot and insurrection ! I feel better already after a three days' absence but another dose of all the parties may go to my head, I am thus not at all desirous of attending the meetings in Delhi. But I do not know what might happen.

**To Gandhiji on 23 February 1928**

2. The (All-Parties) Conference (at Delhi) was a very trying affair. It was a battle of a few extremists on either side—Jinnah and his group on one side and the Hindu Mahasabha on the other—the others had little say in the matter except when they got angry. I was thoroughly fed up with both the groups....Things are moving slowly....There is a great deal of talk of war in the near future.

**To Syed Mahmud on 17 March 1928**

3. The 'agreed draft constitution' seems to be as far off as ever. Indeed I think it is further off. Even in our little committee a sufficient amount of heat is engendered—and it is not easy to consider communal question dispassionately. I do not know if anything will happen next week when a final effort is going to be made to settle differences. I doubt it. Everybody thinks he is 100% in the right and the other party is a narrow-minded obstinate pig or bigot of the worst kind. This does not produce a helpful atmosphere....My presence at committee meetings is a trial to all concerned.... My occasional intrusions are not welcomed... I do not fit in with anything. I am always the square peg and the holes are all round. I feel very lonely.

**To Gandhiji on 30 June 1928**

4. The All Parties Committee has not progressed very satisfactorily.... The main items in dispute .....are the N.W. F.P., Sind and reservation of seats for majorities... It seems to me that we must tackle the problem and solve it once for all and not have anachronisms based on unreal communal differences in our Constitution....So far there has been no agreement.

**To Syed Mahmud on 30 June 1928**

5. The ( All Parties ) Conference has undoubtedly been a tremendous success.....I hope this Conference has given the finishing kicks to communalism.

**Speech at Lucknow on 4 September  
1928 on results of the All-Parties Conference**

6. The Committee has not given much thought so far to the question of labour....The main problem before it is the communal problem. As soon as this bugbear is

removed some attention can be paid to other important subjects.

**To S.S, Mirajkar (trade union leader and  
a Communist of Bombay) on 11 June 1928**

7. It should be made clear that the constitution should establish a democratic socialistic republic in India.... Territorial elections should as far as possible give way to elections by economic units....Representation by economic units will not only ensure real and effective legislatures representing the life of the country and every interest therein but will also automatically do away with the problem of communal representation.

**Statement at All-Parties Conference on 8 March 1928**

*[Selected Works of Jawaharlal Nehru (Orient Longman, 1972) pp. 36-61].*

## **H**

*Extracts from a speech delivered by Bhagat Singh at the foundation of Hindustan Socialist Republican Association on 8 September 1928 :*

The name of the party, despite the fact that it is clearer than the principles of the Hindustan Republican Party and the goal of Swaraj by the Congress, has become obsolete. By adding the word 'socialist' to it we can tell the Indian masses that the goal of the Indian Revolutionary Movement is to establish socialist state in India, in which the Indian people will be equal partners in the Indian Freedom and the Indian Democracy....The word 'socialist' will be a symbol of the type of rule we want to bring about in the country. In the modern age such a clarification is absolutely essential because step by step



we want to make our movement, the movement of the masses. This is also our final goal. It is, therefore, absolutely essential that the masses whom we want that they should make sacrifice in this field should know the result or fruit of their sacrifice. By adding this word 'socialist' we are not trying to tarnish the name of our beloved leaders who have already left for their heavenly abode; but we are following into their footsteps which they expected from us. Besides this, those who are our helpers are conversant not with our name but with our work, and that is the reason they help us. The change in the name will increase their faith in our organization rather than decrease it.\*

[Cited by Vishwanath Vaishampayan, *Amar Shahid Chander Shekhar Azad*, Vols. II & III (Mirzapore, Krantikari Prakashan Mala., 1967) pp. 62-63].

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\* It is interesting to recall that Bhagat Singh's proposal was vehemently opposed by Fanindra Ghosh and Manmohan Banerji. They were in favour of continuing the old name of the party. They were afraid that by the adoption and inclusion of the word "socialist" the revolutionary party may not lose sympathy of the people. The upper class intelligentsia will be afraid of it. And it will be tragic loss to the movement. But there were others like Bhagat Singh who held that of what use would be that independence which did not guarantee the right of the poor who might be deprived of their freedom of self-determination. Although in the beginning Chander Shekhar Azad was taken aback by the new change in the name of the party, yet he was persuaded to accept it in the course of discussions. The explanations rendered by others made him understand that in purely republican form of government it was also possible that white bureaucracy might be substituted by a coloured (black) bureaucracy and the capitalist might continue to exploit the common man by controlling the state power. That is why the common masses which would be the main bulwark and vanguard of freedom struggle, should be taken into confidence by adding the word "socialist" to the name of the party. [*Ibid*, pp. 63-65].

*An extract entitled "An Appeal" from the Manifesto of the Hindustan Socialist Republican Association distributed all over the country on 26 January 1930 :*

We take this opportunity to appeal to our countrymen, to the youth, to the workers and peasants, to the revolutionary intelligentsia to come forward and to join us in carrying aloft the banner of freedom. Let us establish new order of society in which political and economic exploitation will be an impossibility. In the name of those gallant men and women who willingly accepted death so that we, their descendants, may lead a happier life, who toiled ceaselessly and perished for the poor defamished and exploited millions of India, we call upon every patriot to take up the fight in all seriousness. Let nobody toy with the Nation's freedom which is her very life by making psychological experiments with non-violence and such other novelties.

[From the text cited by Vishwanath Vaishampayan, *Amar Shahid Chandershekhar Azad*, Vols. II & III (Mirzapore, Krantikari Prakashan Mala, 1967), pp. 327-28].

## J

*An extract from a letter written to his brother by Sukhdev on the eve of his martyrdom in 1931 :*

...I want to tell you that the object of our actions was that people's wants be fulfilled, that they may understand our complaints against the government, so that we may gain people's favour and sympathy. Keeping this object in view thus we want to propagate revolutionary ideas and policies among the people. And such ideas become more effective

when they are expressed by a person who is standing on the altar of guillotine to attain his objective.

[Cited by Vishwanath Vaishampayan, *Amar Shahid Chandershekhar Azad*, Vols. II and III, p. 287].

## K

*Text of the letter written on 13 September, 1927 by the famous revolutionary Roshan Singh on the eve of his martyrdom by hanging due to his participation in Kakori "Conspiracy" :*

इस सप्ताह के भीतर फांसी होगी। ईश्वर से प्रार्थना है कि वह आपकी मोहब्बत का बदला दें। आप मेरे लिए हरगिज रंज न करें। मेरी मौत खुशी का बायस होगी। दुनिया में पैदा होने पर मरना जरूरी है। दुनिया में बदफैली कर मनुष्य अपने को बदनाम न करे। और मरते वक्त ईश्वर को याद करे। यही दो बातें होनी चाहिये। और ईश्वर की कृपा से मेरे साथ दोनों ही बातें हैं। इसलिए मेरी मौत किसी प्रकार अफसोस के लायक नहीं है। दो साल से मैं बालबच्चों से अलग हूँ। इस बीच ईश्वर भजन का खूब मौका मिला। इससे मेरा मोह छूट चुका है। मेरा पूरा विश्वास है कि दुनिया की कष्ट भरी यात्रा समाप्त कर मैं आराम की जिंदगी के लिए जा रहा हूँ। हमारे शास्त्रों में लिखा है कि धर्मयुद्ध में मरने वालों की वही गति होती है जो जंगल में रह कर तपस्या करने वालों की होती है :—

जिंदगी जिंदा दिली को जान ऐ रोशन ।

वरना कितने मरे और पैदा होते जाते हैं ॥

आखिरी नमस्ते !

रोशन

[Cited by Vishwanath Vaishampayan, *Amar Shahid Chandershekhar Azad* (Mirzapore, Krantikari Prakashan Mala, 1965) Vol. I, p. 124].

## L

*An extract from the letter written on 14 September, 1927 by another young revolutionary Rajendra Lahiri on the eve of his hanging on 17 September, 1927 in Gonda Prison:*

कल मैंने मुना कि प्रीवो कौंसिल ने मेरी अपील अस्वीकार कर दी। आप लोगों ने हम लोगों की प्राण रक्षा के लिए बहुत कुछ किया; कुछ भी उठा नहीं रखा। परन्तु मालूम होता है कि देश की बलिबेदी को हमारे रक्त की आवश्यकता है। मृत्यु क्या है? जीवन की दूसरी दिशा के सिवा कुछ भी नहीं। इसके लिए मनुष्य दुःख और भय क्यों मरने। यह तो नितान्त स्वाभाविक अवस्था है, उतनी ही स्वाभाविक जितना की प्रातःकालीन सूर्य का उदय होना। यदि यह सच है कि इतिहास षट्ठा खाएगा तो मैं समझता हूँ कि हमारी मृत्यु व्यर्थ नहीं जाएगी।

सबको मेरा नमस्कार

आपका

राजेन्द्र

[Ibid, p 12].

## M

*An extract from the letter written by renowned revolutionary leader Pandit Ram Prasad "Bismil" on the eve of his martyrdom by hanging in Gorakhpur Jail on 19 December, 1927:*

१६ तारीख को जो कुछ होने वाला है उसके लिए मैं तैयार हूँ। यह है ही क्या? केवल शरीर का बदलना मात्र। मुझे विश्वास है कि मेरी आत्मा मातृभूमि तथा उसकी दोन संतति के लिए नये उत्साह और जोश के साथ काम करने के लिए शीघ्र ही फिर लौट आएगी।

आपका

राम प्रसाद "बिस्मिल"

[Ibid, 123-24].

## N

*An extract from the statement of still another renowned revolutionary leader Ashfaqullah on the occasion of his martyrdom by hanging :*

मेरे हाथ इत्सानी खून से नहीं रंगे हैं। मुझ पर जो इल्जाम लगाया गया है, वह गलत है। "खुदा के यहां मेरा इन्साफ होगा।"

मरने के पहिले उन्होंने एक शेर बनाया था :

तंग आकर जालिमों के जुल्म-ओ-बेदार से।

चल दिए सूए अदम जिदाने फैजाबाद से ॥

आप का ताबेदार

अशफाक

[Ibid, p. 123].

## O

*Symbolic portrayal of the sacrifices made by Bhagat Singh and his family elders :*

सरदार अर्जुन सिंह ने साहस कर अन्धविश्वास और परम्परा की जड़ता से बन्द अपने घर के द्वार खोल दिये और ऊबड़-खाबड़ मार्ग को साफ कर अपने आँगन में यज्ञवेदी बना दी।

सरदार किशन सिंह ने उस द्वार से आँगन तक के क्षेत्र को सीप-पोत कर यज्ञवेदी पर एक विशाल हवन-कुण्ड प्रतिष्ठित कर दिया।

सरदार अजीत सिंह ने उस हवन-कुण्ड में समिधाएं सजा, उन पर एक दहकता अंगारा रख दिया।

सरदार स्वर्ण सिंह ने उसे झपक कर लपट में बदल दिया।

बस फिर क्या था, लपटें उठीं और खूब उठीं।

सरदार अजीत सिंह उन लपटों के लिए नये ईंधन की तलाश में दूर चले गये और जल्दी लौट न सके।

वे लपटें बुझ जातीं, पर सरदार किशनसिंह उनके अंग-रक्षक बने रहे, उन्हें बचाये रहे।

भगत सिंह ने इधर-उधर ईंधन की तलाश न कर अपने जीवन को ही ईंधन बना झोंका और लपटों को पूरी तरह उभार कर इस तरह उछाल दिया कि वे देश-भर में फैल गयीं; देश का हर आंगन एक हवन-कुण्ड बन गया।

[Virendra Sindhu, *Yugdrashta Bhagat Singh Aur Unke Mrityuanjay Purkhe* (Bharatiya Gyan Pith Publication, 1968), p. 7].

## P

*A folk song known as "Rashtriya Holi" about Rani of Jhansi composed by Vishwanath Vaishampayan in the twenties :*

खेली ऐसी होली  
सुरंग रंग केसर बोरी  
महारानी ने गढ़ पर  
फाग की धूम मचाई।  
लाल रंग पिचकारी छूटे  
भूमि भई सरबोरी  
महारस रंग मचोरी ॥

[Vishwanath Vaishampayan, *Amar Shahid Chandershekhar Azad* (Mirzapore, Krantikari Prakashan Mala, 1967) Vols. II & III, p. 71].

## Q

*Correspondence in regard to the prosecution of the daily newspaper, Independent (Allahabad) :*

*The confidential note submitted to the Viceroy by the Home Secretary, C.W. Groyne on 31 May 1921 :*

The question now is whether proceedings should be taken against the *Independent*, or not. The case against the

*Independent* is not really dependent on the course of actions decided upon in the case of the Ali Brothers. The tone of the paper has been and is consistently bad. It has given no undertaking to be moderate in the future and has never made any apology for the excesses of the past. There seems, therefore, every reason to prosecute the *Independent*. His Excellency's orders will be required.

*Telegram dated 31 May 1921 sent to William Vincent, Home Member, by Sir Harcourt Butler, Governor of the United Provinces :*

...A campaign of unexampled mendacity and acurrility against Government officers undoubtedly endangering their lives has been conducted by this paper (*Independent*).

*Telegram No 981, dated Simla, the 5 June 1921 from Sir William Vincent, Home Member, Simla, to Sir Harcourt Butler, Governor of the United Provinces :*

His Excellency with whom the Government of India concur thinks that the management of *Independent* should be offered a *locus poenitentiae* similar to that given to the Ali Brothers. On this personal ground he desires that person responsible for the policy of the *Independent* against whom it was proposed to proceed, should be given opportunity of publishing an apology...together with an undertaking to abstain in future from such campaign and to refrain from publishing further articles directly or indirectly inciting to violence or calculated to create an atmosphere of readiness for violence. Should undertaking not be kept, proceedings should, of course, be instituted without delay.

In their letter of the 9th July 1921, the United Provinces have sent a reply to the telegram from the Home Member to Sir H. Butler of the 5th of June 1921, regarding the prosecution of the *Independent*. Mr Joseph, the editor of the

newspaper, and Mr. Ranga Iyer, publisher and printer have both been given an opportunity to express regret and to give an undertaking as regards future articles in the paper. Mr. Joseph has definitely refused to tender any apology, but no reply has been received from Mr. Ranga Iyer. The United Provinces Government, however, state that they cannot hope to get a more satisfactory reply from him than from Mr. Joseph. They, therefore, propose to proceed against both...

The United Provinces Government also propose to proceed under the same section against Pundit Jawaharlal Nehru on account of certain seditious speeches made by him

[ Home ( Pol.) Dept., Govt. of India, File No. 112/1922, serial Nos. 1-8, pp. 11-12].

Letter No. 1337, dated the 16th June, 1921.

From—The Chief Secretary to the Government of the United Provinces.

To—The Publisher of the *Independent* newspaper, Allahabad.

I am directed to invite your attention to the extracts from the *Independent* attached to this letter. The Government is advised that these are actionable under the law....Before taking action however, it has decided to give you a *locus poenitentiae* if you will express regret and undertake not to publish in future statements directly or indirectly inciting to violence or calculated to create an atmosphere of readiness for violence. In the event of your making such a statement no proceedings will be taken in regard to articles already published, nor will action be taken in regard to subsequent articles as long as you observe the undertaking made.



Letter, dated Ramgarh (district Naini Tal),<sup>e</sup> the 26th June 1926.

From—PANDIT MOTI LAL NEHRU, Chairman, Board of Directors, Nationalist Journals, Limited, Allahabad.

To—The Chief Secretary to the Government of the United Provinces.

I have received only this morning, though posted at Allahabad on the 22nd June 1921, a copy of your letter No. 1338 (Department Policy), dated Naini Tal, the 19th June 1921, with enclosures addressed to Mr. George Joseph, editor of the *Independent* newspaper of Allahabad. I am informed that the said letter was handed to Mr. George Joseph by the District Magistrate of Allahabad on the 22nd June 1921, that a similar letter was handed to Mr. C. S. Ranga Iyer, printer of the *Independent* on the same day and that both these gentlemen were required to give their replies within a week.

2. With reference to the said letter, I have to state that the *Independent* newspaper is owned by the Nationalist Journals, Limited, a duly registered Joint Stock Company of which I am the Chairman of the Board of Directors. The paper is conducted in pursuance of the policy laid down by the Directors and having regard to the nature of the extracts selected by the Government to form the subject of proceedings against the printer and the editor it becomes necessary for the Directors to deal with the matter before the editor and the printer take any action.

3. The Board cannot meet much before the 15th July 1921, owing to my absence in the hills on account of bad health and I have to inform you that replies of the editor and the printer cannot be given before that date. I have wired to the District Magistrate, Allahabad to the same effect.

Copy of a letter, dated the 28th June 1921.

From

Mr. George Joseph, of the *Independent* newspaper.

To

The Chief Secretary to the Government of the United Provinces.

Your letter dated June 16th,

I have the reply to your letter nearly ready, but Pandit Moti Lal Nehru, the Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Nationalist Journals Limited, is out of town and he has asked me to defer my answer till he comes back to Allahabad. I shall wait till then. If, on the other hand, you cannot wait conveniently any longer, please let me know.

Telegram No. 43-p., dated the 4th July 1921.

From—The Chief Secretary to the Government of the United Provinces.

To—Pandit Moti Lal Nehru, Almora.

In reply to your letter, dated Ramgarh, 26th June I am directed to say that Government expects a reply from the editor and publisher of *Independent* not later than 16th July. Same applies to Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru. This date cannot be extended.

Letter no. 1742, dated the 5th July 1921.

From—The Chief Secretary to the Government of the United Provinces.

To—George Joseph, Esq., Editor of the *Independent*, Allahabad.

I am desired to reply to letter of the 28th June. Pandit Moti Lal Nehru, to whom you refer, has also written on

this subject, and has been informed that Government expects a reply from you and the publisher not later than the 16th July, and that this date cannot be extended.

Letter, dated Ramgarh, the 5th July 1921.

From—George Joseph, Esq., Editor of the *Independent Newspaper*.

To— The Chief Secretary to the Government of the United Provinces.

I have the honour to acknowledge your letter dated the 16th ultimo drawing my attention to certain extracts from the *Independent* and giving me an opportunity of expressing regret and telling me that in the event of my giving an undertaking “not to publish in future statements directly or indirectly inciting to violence or calculated to create an atmosphere of readiness for violence”, no proceeding will be taken against me. Having carefully considered your letter and the extracts, I wish to state that I do not believe the extracts contain any incitement to violence or any tendency to the creation of an atmosphere of readiness for violence. But were it otherwise I could not have tendered an apology in order to purchase my freedom from a Government with which I do not co-operate.

I may, however, state that I am pledged to the creed of non-violence; and if the passages referred to had borne, in my opinion, the meaning sought to be put upon by the Government, I would certainly have apologized to the public for misleading it.

[Home (Political) Dept., Govt. of India, File No. 112/1922, pp. 41-44].

Letter No. 1603, dated Naini Tal, the 13th July 1921.

From - G.B. Lambert, Esq., I.C.S., Chief Secretary to the Government of the United Provinces.

To— The Secretary to the Government of India, Home Deptt.

In continuation of my letter No. 1543, dated the 9th July 1921, I am directed to forward herewith for the information of the Government of India a copy of a letter dated the 7th July 1921, received from Mr. C.S. Ranga Iyer, Publisher of the *Independent*, Allahabad.

Letter dated the 7th July 1921.

From—Mr. C.S. Ranga Iyer, Publisher of the *Independent* Allahabad.

To — The Chief Secretary to the Government of the United Provinces.

In reply to your letter of the 16th June 1921, giving me a *locus poenitentiae* and inviting me to “express regret and undertake not to publish in future statement directly or indirectly inciting to violence or calculated to create an atmosphere of readiness for violence” I beg to make the following statement :

I have read the extracts from the *Independent* attached to your letter with most anxious thought and care. My anxiety lay not in the threatened prosecution but in my earnest desire to be true to myself, and to the cause. After availing myself of every possible means of avoiding error I have come to the conclusion that these extracts do not directly or indirectly incite to violence, nor do they tend to create an atmosphere of violence. “The Government is advised”, you say, “That they are actionable under the law”. But you do not say whether the Government is further advised “that they directly or indirectly incite to violence”. It is, therefore, not clear to me whether I am asked to express regret for their being actionable under the law or for their supposed violent tendency.

As far as their being actionable under the law is concerned, I sincerely believe that in the present state of the law and

in the present mood of the Government and its magistracy every strong criticism of the Government can be made the basis of the successful prosecution. Therefore for a journalist to express regret for strong criticism and that for fear of the pillory will be cowardly and playing false to his idea.

...as far as the question of non violence is concerned, these extracts do not fairly represent the draft of the articles from which they are made. I would take them seriatim to make my meaning clear.

The first group of the extracts is from the *Independent* of the 11th January 1921, from its leading article on "The Kisan crisis." The last extract of this group ends as follows :

"If the Kisans had paid the local bureaucracy in the same coin in the name of peace and safety it could have inflicted greater atrocities. So far there is no knowing whether the district officer and the machines of militarism will exercise a much needed self-restraint "

And the very next sentence has wholly been omitted. "However, it is very gratifying to us that the Kisans, notwithstanding ample provocation have not budged from the path of non-violence". The second extract is from the *Independent* of the same date from an Editorial Note headed, "New Era in Rai Bareilly." The notes of that date are in a way an amplification of the leading article and deal with the same subject. The very next note after the "New Era in Rai Bareilly" is "peasants patience", and deals wholly with non-violence. I give it in extenso :

"That an overwhelming majority of the Kisans were not roughs and toughs, prepared to meet violence with violence is patent. Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru—with the sword of Damocles over his head—preached to them patience, tolerance, non-violence. They listened, they followed, they stuck to the

principle of non-co-operation. Really the Kisans have so far behaved admirably. It would be idle to paint them "Blood thirsty holligans" after the admirable spirit they have shown. They are suffering in sorrow and silence and curbing their temper—for the Kisans too have got a temper—in the name of the cause so near and dear to their heart. They know theirs is a just cause. They have faith in the justice of their cause. They have faith in their guide Mahatma Gandhi who is an instrument in the hands of God. It is this faith and this faith alone that restrained them in their righteous indignation. A British mob would tear a leader who preaches patience when the enemy is spouting death. But the Kisans of Rai Bareilli listened to Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru and retired to the villages. That shows that non-violent non-co-operation has taken deep root in the country. And God grant that the spirit spread wider and wider. For when the feeling of virtuous resolve, to face death even, has grown, we would have created a power which the combined virulence of Indian and foreign tyrants cannot kill."

The second group of extracts is from an Editorial Note of the *Independent* of the 13th February 1921. The circumstances of Baba Ram Chandar's arrest are discussed and then the following conclusion is drawn:

"There is only one conclusion possible and we are unwillingly driven to it. The arrest was deliberately made to provoke the people assembled and if possible to cause a riot."

Here the extract stops. It leaves out the very next

"Fortunately the arrest itself became an instrument and an occasion for a lesson in self-restraint and non-violence."

[Home (Pol.), File 112/1922 p. 66].

## R

*Prosecution of Jawahar Lal Nehru:*

Letter No. 1339-dated the 16th June 1921.

From—The Chief Secretary to the Government of the United Provinces.

To—Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru, Allahabad.

I am directed to invite your attention to the speeches made by you which are attached to this letter. The Government is advised that these are actionable under the law. Before taking action, however, it has decided to give you a *locus poenitentie* if you will express regret and undertake not to deliver in future speeches directly or indirectly inciting to violence or calculated to create an atmosphere of readiness for violence. In the event of your making such a statement no proceedings will be taken in regard to speeches already delivered, nor will action be taken in regard to the subsequent speeches as long as you observe the undertaking made.

Letter dated the 4th July 1921.

From—Pandit Jawahar Lal Nehru, Ramgarh.

To—The Chief Secretary to the Government of the United Provinces.

Your letter No. 1339 dated the 16th June 1921, together with some extracts was delivered to me by the Collector of Allahabad on the 22nd June. I was also provided the same evening with what purported to be full reports taken by the C.I.D. of the three speeches made by me from which these extracts are said to have been taken.

The question whether the speeches I have delivered are or are not actionable under the general provisions of the existing law has no practical importance in view of the special terms of the undertaking I am called upon to give, and in any case is one to which I am wholly indifferent. It is immaterial to me whether the Government does or does not proceed

against me and I am not prepared to treat with it in any manner or to give it any undertaking to avoid such proceedings. What I am concerned with, however, is whether I have been guilty of any deviation from truth or any incitement to violence. Non-co-operation is to me a sacred thing and its very basis is truth and non-violence. If in the excitement of the moment I have used words or phrases which offend against these principles, then I have erred and it is my duty to acknowledge my error and to express my regret to the public, regardless of the doings or intentions of Government. But even if I have so erred I could not apologize to Government to secure my own immunity from a prosecution.

The three speeches to which my attention has been drawn were delivered many months ago—the Allahabad speeches as long ago as November 1920 and the Sultanpur speech four months ago. I have no exact recollection of what I said then but after a careful perusal of the reports you have sent me I am inclined to think that the speeches have suffered from bad reporting and mistranslation. Qualifying words and phrases are wanting in places and many gaps occur. The Sultanpur report is on the face of it a very brief summary of what I am supposed to have said. A speech lasting nearly an hour has been given in two type-written pages. The Daira Shah Ajmal report is most disjointed and credits me with giving utterance to some ridiculous statements. I am reported to have said that “Jallianwala Bagh had been perpetrated all over India”. I must have either said that Jallianwala Bagh had been perpetrated in India or that Jallianwala Bagh may be perpetrated all over India. The statement about Kabul is somewhat contradictory. I certainly do not “like” the idea of an Afghan army marching into India and could not have said so. What I clearly must have said was that I was not afraid of an Afghan invasion and was prepared to oppose it if occasion arose. I have repeatedly stated that I do not want strangers as rulers in this country whether they be Englishmen, Afghans, Bolsheviks or Japanese.



I need not, however, go into the question of the wording of the reports. It is clear to me that there has been some distortion of what I said. But I certainly have used language which is in places very bitter. The Daria Shah Ajmal speech dealt with the treatment meted to the African Negroes for several hundred years by the English. The figures I mention were taken from a book on the subject by a well-known English writer (Morel's *Black Man's Burden*) which I had read a short while before. My language is undoubtedly harsh and bitter but the subject was an unpleasant one and I felt strongly on it. I tried to make it clear that my words did not refer to Englishmen as such. If, however, I produced the impression that I was condemning the whole English people, among whom I number some valued and respected friends, I shall certainly be prepared to express regret to the public for unconsciously misleading it.

I have carefully considered these speeches and I can find no incitement to violence or untrue statement in any of them. I have, therefore, no occasion to express my regret. Truth and non-violence are the very foundations of my creed. They have been enjoined upon me by the National Congress. In all humility but with all the strength that is in me I have endeavoured to live up to these high ideals and trust I shall ever continue to do so. But I give no undertakings to a Government with which I have non-co-operated.

[Home, Dept. (Pol.), File 112/1922, pp. 43-47].

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